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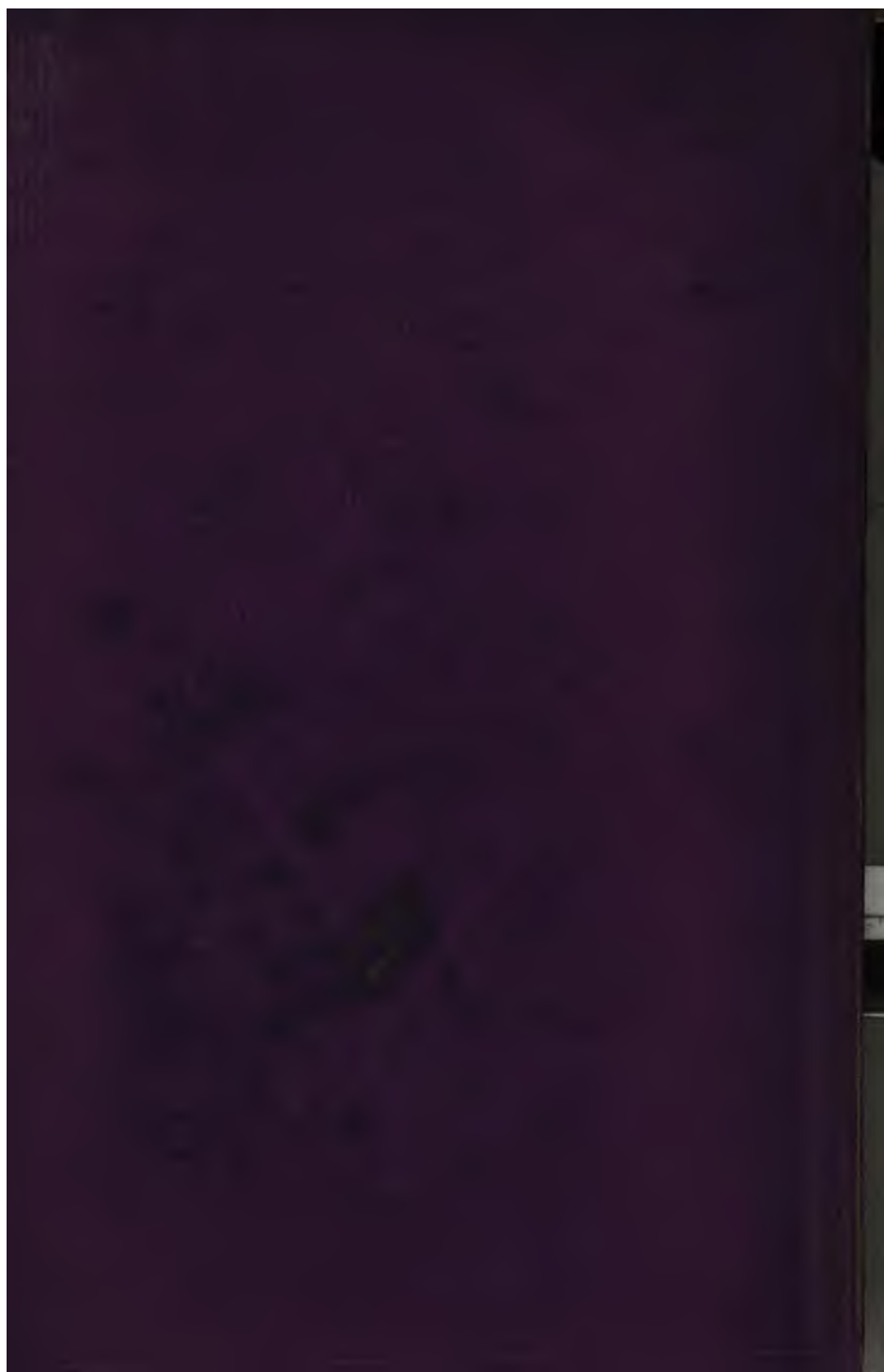
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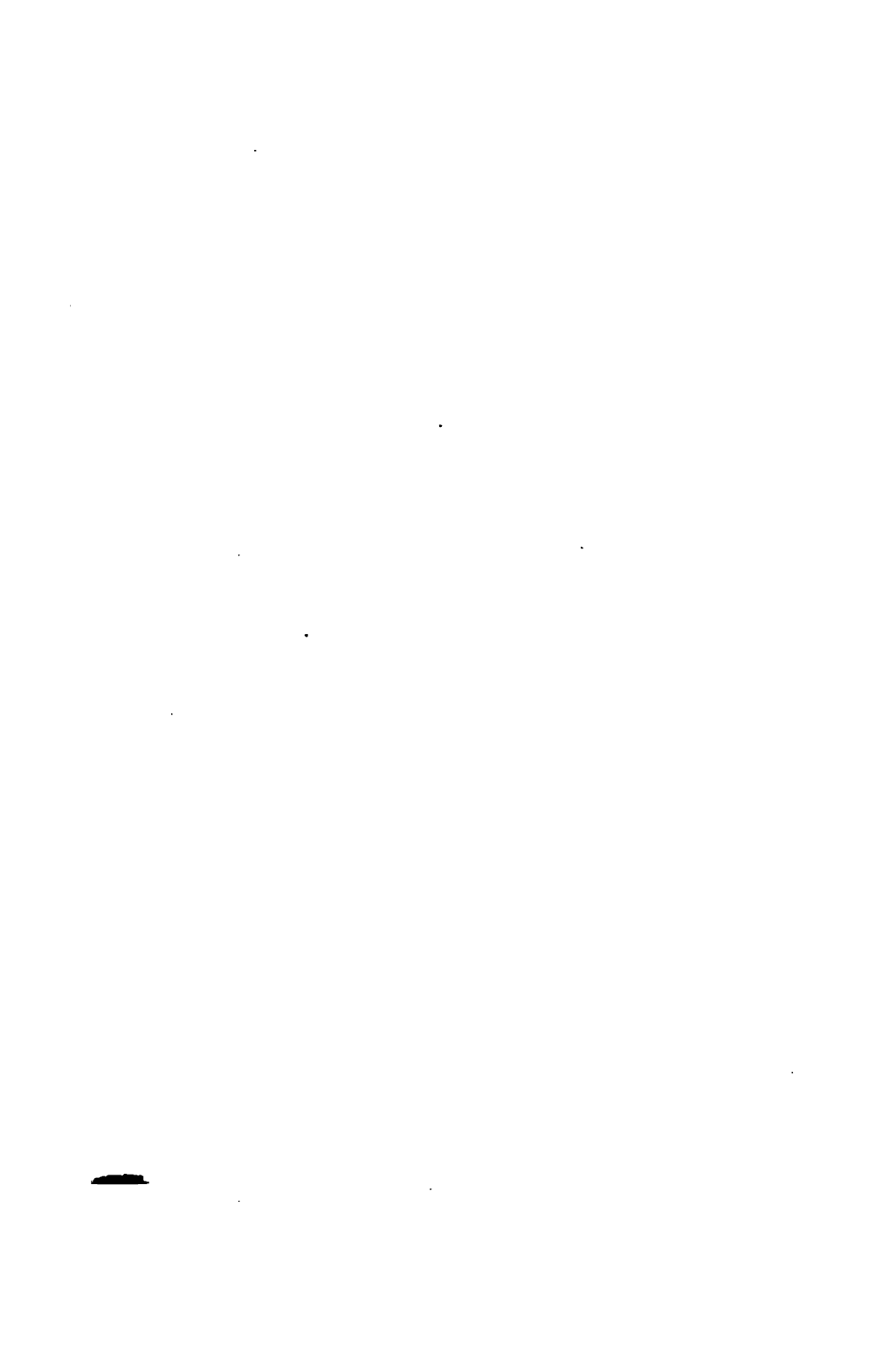
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HARRY DISNEY.





**HARRY DISNEY.**

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# HARRY DISNEY.

An Autobiography.



EDITED BY

ATHOLL DE WALDEN.

Give me, instead of Beauty's bust,  
A tender heart, a loyal mind,  
Which with temptation I can trust,  
Though never linked with error find.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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# HARRY DISNEY.



## CHAPTER I.

### END OF THE FIRST ACT.

'Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame !  
I hold that man the worst of public foes  
Who either for his own or children's sake,  
To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife  
Whom he knows false, abide and rule the house.'



N my arrival at Double Zero House  
I found all the party had re-  
turned from Eden Lodge. The  
Tournament had been a most decided  
success, and its crowning triumph was the  
ball that had been given at its conclusion  
on Saturday night. Twenty large tents had



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been erected in Moor Park, and fitted up in the most splendid style *à la Mauresque*. The elegance of their decorations and the splendour of their appointments were such, that by the kind permission of the Duke of Rohan, and at the instigation of Sir Burr Lesque, the public were admitted to view them for the next week.

There was no doubt now that Lady Trevennis had achieved the object of her ambition—the being *première* leader of *ton* in London. Everybody praised her, toadied her, and bowed down to her. As for the tradespeople, her name had supplied them with more than one advertisement of their wares. Trevennis brown, Trevennis maroon, *bottines à la Trevennis*, *gants de Trevennis*, the Trevennis *jupon*, the *chapeau de tournoi*, and a beautiful little Park phaeton that Thrupp and Maberley had just invented was called ‘the Trevennis.’

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Indeed the name of Trevennis was at this time considered as a recommendation for any article of dress, taste, or luxury. It was not therefore surprising to any but the extreme Fossils, that Lady Trevennis should have been appointed First Mistress of the Clothes Basket, to the exclusion of the Duchess of Hanging-under-Lyne, who had to content herself with being merely Scullion Extraordinary of the Kitchen Infantry.


Lady Trevennis was perfectly content with the manner in which I had performed my mission, and thanked me most cordially for the trouble I had been at. I told her of my discovering Lord Edgeware behind the arras, and his solemn denial that he had heard anything of our conversation. At first she looked pale and anxious at my statement; but soon recovered herself, and said, 'If he had heard anything, I am sure he would have mentioned the subject to me.

And besides, even if he had heard what I said to you, he would not have been very much enlightened; for after all, you have no idea yourself why I wished you to go to the Tuileries, have you?’

‘Not the slightest,’ I replied.

‘I do not see,’ she continued, ‘any necessity to doubt Lord Edgeware in this matter: you are prejudiced against him, and of course believe everything that is bad about him. But, however, it is a matter of indifference to me whether he did hear or did not.’ And the conversation dropped.

For the next few days the London papers were full of the trial of Vaudrien and his brother conspirators. The prisoners pleaded of course not guilty; but the evidence against them, and especially against Vaudrien, was so strong, that escape from the punishment they so richly merited was out of the question. Witnesses were freely



called, who gave their evidence against the prisoners with the most damning truthfulness and unanimity. The detective employed by Lady Trevennis was one of the most important of these gentlemen; and as he stated all he knew about Vaudrien—how he had followed him all over the Continent, copied his letters, and read and copied many of their answers, and to corroborate his evidence brought into open court the infernal machine, and the papers which stated with the most diabolical precision how the machine was to be used, against whom it was to be directed, and the names of the leading conspirators, all ending with a solemn adjuration that the Emperor and his dynasty were to be annihilated—as, I say, men heard all this, it became a foregone conclusion that the prisoners would be brought in guilty—Vaudrien to receive a severer sentence than the others. At last, after days of

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the strictest investigation and the most patient attention that a *cause célèbre* ever commanded, the trial ended. The jury, after a five hours' consultation among themselves, returned into court, and pronounced their verdict of guilty on all the points that were laid before them. The judge of the Cour de Cassation now delivered sentence, and his judgment surprised none who had carefully listened to the details of the trial. The thirty conspirators were sentenced to the galleys — some for life, and some for various terms of years. Vaudrien, as the presiding genius over the whole affair, who had directed all its movements, and who had selected himself in preference to his other brother conspirators to discharge the shell beneath the carriage of the Imperial family, was condemned to death. He received his sentence with perfect calmness, and replied to the court, that he 'died a

martyr to a grand and noble cause—the extirpation of despotism, and the resurrection of republicanism.’

Lady Trevennis and Mr. Faynix took a deep interest in the trial; and when the chief conspirator had been sentenced to the guillotine, the former calmly remarked, ‘I really think they all should suffer the same penalty;’ whilst Faynix said, ‘I wish the same fate would befall many of *our* rabid republicans; they will be a thorn in the Government, which, if not soon plucked out, will fester.’

It was about four days after the conclusion of this trial that I was seated in my writing-room, before breakfast, busily engaged copying out some extracts from a blue-book which Mr. Faynix wanted early that day to lay before a select committee of which he was chairman, and which was to meet at the House at eleven. At eight

o'clock I was interrupted in my work by the servant bringing in the letters. It was my duty always to receive the morning letters, to send up to Lady Trevennis those belonging to her, and to read and indorse all letters not marked 'private' which were addressed to Mr. Faynix. There were only two letters for Lady Trevennis; and I sent them up at once to her.

'Any letters for Sir John?' I asked the servant; because, since the Admiral had taken up his abode at Princes-gardens, I used occasionally to send up his; though not very often, because the Baronet was an early riser.

'Yes, sir; Sir John 'ave took them, though, from the postman himself, whom he just met as he was a-going to take his walk in the Park.'

'O, O!' I answered, and went on with my work.

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It was about a quarter of an hour after I had received the letters that my door opened, and Lady Trevennis entered hurriedly. She was as pale as death, and trembled in every limb with suppressed agitation. Her appearance bore the evident marks of a hasty toilet. Her beautiful hair was undressed, and simply coiled round behind her head in a loose knot; and a long pale blue cashmere wrapper trimmed with lace concealed her figure. She looked as if she had just quitted her couch, and had had no time to pay her usual devoirs before her mirror. In her trembling hand she held a letter.

‘Have any letters come this morning for Sir John?’ she asked, her breathless agitated voice plainly indicating the nervous terror under which she laboured.

‘I believe so; but I haven’t seen any, because he took them himself from the



postman. But what is the matter, my dear Lady Trevennis?’

‘O, never mind,’ said she excitedly, and apparently not knowing what she said or what to do.

‘But I *do* mind. Can I do anything to assist you? There must be some reason for all this excitement? Tell me what it is, and trust in me as you have before done,’ said I; for her agitation seemed to increase every moment.

‘Yes, do this. Let me see *all* letters that come to Sir John before he gets possession of them. Ah! but perhaps it is already too late!’ ejaculated she despairingly.

‘It is, madam, already too late!’ said a stern voice behind her, that made her start with terror; and then, after an earnest look at him full of passionate supplication, she threw herself at his feet, crying,

‘John, forgive me ! O, John, for God’s sake, forgive me !’

I looked at him to see how he would regard this appeal as I rose up to quit the room ; for I thought that in a scene between man and wife a third party is most uncomfortably *de trop*. He was as agitated as Lady Trevennis, and his face, pale, haggard, and lined, seemed to have aged ten years since yesterday ; his eyes were red and moist with tears, and his lips trembled as he tried to speak with cold severity.

‘Madam, forgiveness is impossible. By your own wicked deceit you have placed it beyond my power. To forgive you would involve, not merely your continuing to bear my name, but the foisting a child whose father I am not upon my estate as its heir. Do not leave us, Mr. Disney. I am aware of the nature of your mission to Paris ; wait here, and you will see what are its results ;’

and he held up a long letter which he had in his hand.

‘Have you betrayed me, Disney?’ exclaimed Lady Trevennis, rising to her feet, and glaring at me like a wild animal caught in a snare.

‘No, madam, he has not,’ replied Sir John. ‘If any man would serve you, it is Mr. Disney; for it requires no eagle glance to see that he loves you; and for aught I know you may have encouraged his affection—and rewarded it,’ said the old man, looking haughtily down upon her, his contemptuous face as pitiless as death.

The words and the insinuation stung Lady Trevennis to the quick, and she answered him before I could speak.

‘You speak falsely, Sir John. I am guilty enough, God knows; but you need not add to that guilt by a remark which is a gross outrage upon me.’

‘Outrage!’ said Sir John, regarding her with a coldness and severity which increased every moment. ‘And what has your life been but a gross outrage upon *me*? A pretended wife, a pretended mother, you make me at one fell swoop no husband and no father. That I am not your husband is a grief which,’ said he, looking cynically at her, ‘I may soon get over; but Reggie—I—I—loved that boy heart and soul;’ and Sir John fairly broke down with emotion.

‘O, then, let him be your son, and let me be your wife. Indeed—indeed I will be a wife to you! I know how wicked I have been; but forgive me—O, for God’s sake, forgive me!—and I will be the most patient and the most tender of wives! O, Sir John, you who said you loved me—’

‘I who *said* I loved you!’ broke in Sir John; ‘*said* I loved you! Why, was there ever a wish you expressed which I did not

at once gratify, if it were in my power? Did not I prove to you by my devotion, affection, and attention that I loved you as only a true husband *can* love his wife, till I found out that you had not married *me*, but my wealth and my property? Question your own heart truly,' continued he sternly, 'and see what response it makes when you ask it, *Did* I love you? for you know—none better—how deeply I was attached to you. Yes, thank Heaven, I can say now *was* attached to you.' He paused for a moment. 'And when I found out that I had married no woman, no wife, but a cold calculating machine, who had sold herself for so much gold, and all that generally accompanies wealth; what was even *then* my conduct to you? Why, I made my profession, which I had before looked upon as a pastime, a severe occupation, and left you to enjoy the pleasures of the world and the gaieties of so-

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ciety to your heart's content. My wealth I left you free mistress of—you were at liberty to expend what you pleased; and you, who have never given anything in charity or the promotion of any good work, have spent thousands upon thousands on your amusements, your dresses, and your social hospitalities. Have I ever reproached you for it? No; I knew that you were cold, selfish, and heartless, and that words and good advice would be thrown away upon you—(as they were thrown away upon you when I *did* venture to offer you them); and I let your expenditure be as reckless and as *effrénée* as that of any woman's in London. I felt bound in honour to do this; for had you not *sold* yourself to me for my wealth? and,' said he, drawing himself up, 'I wished not to get the *best* of the bargain. But at least I thought you would have preserved my *name* from scandal and dishonour.'

‘And has Lady Trevennis dishonoured it?’ I said, excitedly; for I could make neither head nor tail of Sir John’s long tirade against his wife. I would have left the room, only the Baronet had his back against the door, and prevented me passing him.

‘Has she dishonoured me?’ cried Sir John, turning round, and trembling with passion that he tried to suppress, so that the household should not hear his voice. ‘Dishonoured me! yes, you young scoundrel! And who knows the fact better than yourself? Do you think I don’t know all about you, sir? Begad, you’re mistaken; for since I’ve been in my house I’ve read your character pretty well, and not all your plausibility and insinuating manners have deceived me! Do you think I don’t know that you are passionately in love with that lady who calls herself my wife, and that you are her

accomplice? Do you think I don't know why you went to Paris a few days ago? I do, sir; and it was to ask in Lady Trevennis' name this man Vaudrien'—and he shook the paper in his hand at me—'not to reveal his marriage with my wife. But your mission has failed, and you will soon see what results are to follow.'

I walked up to Sir John, stood in front of him, folded my arms, and looking at him steadily, said:

'Sir John Trevennis, you are simply a madman! Did not your disease serve as an excuse for the insolent language you have addressed to me, I would have knocked you down, old man though you are. I know nothing of what you are talking about; and—'

'O, sweet innocence of youth!' said the Admiral to me, with savage sarcasm; and then suddenly changing his tone—'You



know everything, sir, and soon you will know more—'

Lady Trevennis, before her husband had commenced his tirade against her, had sunk down into an easy-chair which was close to her, and had buried her face in her hands during the whole time he was addressing her. She now rose up from her seat, gave me a glance, which was as much as to say, 'Do not provoke him;' and, approaching her husband, threw her arms around his neck, and with upturned face, and with eyes that pleaded as they had ne'er pleaded before, implored forgiveness.

'Forgiveness for *what?*' thought I; for I was fairly puzzled between the madness of the one and the uncalled-for penitence of the other.

'O, John! John!' she pleaded, 'let the past be forgotten, and it will not be from any want of love on my part in the future,

if I do not make you forgive all that I have done against you. O, say you will be merciful to me and forgive me, and not trail your proud name in the mire ?'

Beautiful indeed she looked, and piteous enough to have melted a heart of marble. Her splendid hair had escaped from its comb, and fell down like a river that had o'erleaped its dam, inundating her neck and shoulders till it reached her waist. Her willowy arms were perfectly bare as they escaped from the loose deep sleeve of her dressing-robe, and as they encircled her husband's neck revealed their magnificently rounded proportions, whose whiteness was as dazzling as snow when tinged by sunlight. The action of the embrace had burst the topmost button of her dress, and disclosed the exquisite symmetry of her neck and part of her bust. With hands clasped behind his neck, and with her

fair oval face upturned to his, so that lip almost pressed to lip, she implored mercy and forgiveness as woman only can implore *after* she has committed the ‘unpardonable sin.’

She pleaded in vain.

The stern face of Sir John never relaxed a muscle, but silently and severely listened to her voice of supplication, and gazed at her as coldly and as free from passion as did King David on Abishag the Shunamite.

Gently, but with pitiless sternness, he released himself from his living chain, and replied icily:

‘You ask an impossibility! As you have sown, so you must reap!’

She rose up to her full height; for his scorn had touched her at last, and it was not in her nature to plead, but to command. Still she was deadly pale, and there was a

wild look in her eyes—a hopeless baffled look, such as I have seen in a deer when she stands at bay.

‘What do you propose to do, then?’ asked she.

‘To seek the protection of the law!’ he replied sternly.

A thrill passed over her frame, and I thought she would have fainted; but she commanded herself, though she quivered in every limb, and her face was as white as the face of the dead. I felt the hot blood mantling in my cheek, and indignation boiling within me, at the sight of her I loved so terribly agitated. It was evident, however, that Sir John was not mad, but had great cause for offence, since Lady Trevennis seemed to own herself guilty. It only made me hate him all the more.

‘What proofs have you to support your accusation?’ asked Lady Trevennis.

‘Proofs—this!’ and Sir John held up a long letter in his hand.

Like lightning, my arm shot out from my shoulder and seized the document, which I tore to pieces.

A triumphant smile broke over Lady Trevennis’ face, but it faded soon away before the words of her husband. He turned round upon me, and I thought at first he would have struck me, for he was in an awful passion.

‘Ah, Mr. Disney,’ said he, ‘you have revealed yourself in your true colours! If I wanted proof of your complicity with the woman who calls herself my wife, you have given it me just now. But fortunately the paper you have destroyed is only a duplicate of an original in my possession, which was sent by the writer to Mr. Faynix.’

‘Then my father is already acquainted with the matter?’ asked Lady Trevennis.

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Sir John was about to reply, when the door opened behind him, and Mr. Faynix entered. He, too, looked very pale, but calm and self-possessed. He took no notice of me.

‘Unhappy girl! unhappy girl! you have broken my heart by your abominable profligacy!’ said Mr. Faynix, regarding his daughter sternly.

‘None of your reproaches, I beg!’ exclaimed Lady Trevennis haughtily. ‘I can bear anything but that. *You* reproach me indeed! Why, it was you who did all in your power to overcome my dislike to this marriage. I told you—for I knew well my previous history—that I never wished to marry; but you with your coaxing smiles, your arguments about my poverty, and your worldly advice to accept the brilliant future in store for me, persuaded me against my will to link my fate with Sir John.’

‘*I* said this! *I?*’ exclaimed Mr. Faynix; and then turning to Sir John, he said:

‘The poor child is demented, Trevennis; we had better leave her for a while, and come into the breakfast-room to talk over this awful affair.’

‘Yes, leave me!’ shrieked Lady Trevennis at the top of her voice; and her face with its deadly pallor, her wild glaring eyes, and her whole attitude and expression, showed that her nervous system had undergone some terrible shock, and that she was indeed demented. ‘Leave me! both of you, I say, and never let me see your faces again—I hate you both, both, both! Leave me, I say!’ she screamed.

‘Good heavens!’ cried Mr. Faynix, ‘she *is* mad! Here, let us quit the room, Trevennis—our presence only aggravates her; come along, and send for her maid. Good Lord, what an awful morning’s work!’

and he left the room, followed by Sir John.

‘Don’t *you* leave me, Harry! Everybody will desert me now; but you must not—you are the only friend I have,’ said Lady Trevennis, so sadly, so piteously, that I felt the tears start to my eyes.

‘Dear Lady Trevennis, how can you think I would ever desert you, unless you wished it?’ said I.

‘Hush!’ said she, taking my arm and looking into my face with a strange weird-like expression; ‘I am not Lady Trevennis—you must not call me that. I am Mrs. Vaudrien, Vaudrien, Vaudrien!’ she repeated vacantly.

‘Vaudrien! what do you mean?’ said I.

‘That I am not Sir John’s wife, but another man’s; or rather, now, no wife, but a widow, for he, my husband, is dead—guillotined!’ said she, sinking her voice into a



solemn whisper—‘guillotined, and I am his executioner! O, my head, my head! it feels as if it would break!’

‘Let me take you upstairs.’

‘O, Annette,’ said I to the maid, who entered, ‘your mistress is poorly; just give her your arm and conduct her to her own room.’

‘Yes, sir!’ said Annette.

Lady Trevennis took her maid’s arm, and regarded me fixedly as she left my room; and then, as she passed through the doorway, said in a most theatrical tone, ‘Never leave me!’

I sat down in the chair Lady Trevennis had just vacated, and tried to collect my thoughts.

‘What *was* the matter? Lady Trevennis *not* Lady Trevennis, but Mrs. Vaudrien! She the wife of the conspirator? Impossible!’ Whilst I was thus meditating,

I noticed a small piece of paper lying on the floor. I took it up, and found that it was a note. It ran as follows :

‘I have thought it my duty ere I die to reveal *all* to Sir John Trevennis. By the time you receive this, he will get a letter from me, stating *everything* connected with the past, and enclosing all documents relating to our union. I know you have been a kind friend to me, but the conscience is keen before death.

‘Farewell, kindest of friends and of wives.

‘ERNESTINE VAUDRIEN.’

‘Good heavens! Why it’s true, then! She is his wife! Ah, I see it all now! I see why she tracked his every movement, and then denounced him! He dead, all fear of detection would be past, and Sir John would never know that she had been another’s! And now the very means she has adopted

to set herself free have recoiled upon her, and have been her ruin! Ah, the biter is indeed bit this time!

I was disturbed in my reflections by the entrance of Mr. Faynix.

‘Mr. Disney, I shall not need your services any longer. You may leave to-day,’ said he, regarding me haughtily.

‘May I ask, Mr. Faynix, why I am dismissed so suddenly?’ said I.

‘I am not in the habit of stating reasons to my employés,’ said he curtly.

‘Permit me to say that I am not a Civil servant in your office, and this treatment is such that I never expected from you,’ said I.

‘Nor did I ever expect such treatment from *you*, sir,’ said he angrily. ‘I have harboured a viper under my roof, who has insinuated himself into my family for the basest purposes.’

‘I don’t know what you mean, Mr. Fay-nix,’ said I hotly.

‘And I have no intention of enlightening you, sir. Have the goodness to leave me to-day;’ and he quitted the room without another word.

‘Summary dismissal, with a vengeance!’ thought I. And then I pondered over in my mind what I had done to merit this treatment. I could not account for it. ‘Ah,’ thought I, ‘perhaps that letter which I tore up may throw some light upon the matter!’ and I began to put it together.

After some labour and no little ingenuity I succeeded in arranging the fragments of the document in order, and read it through from beginning to end. It was a long elaborate letter from the conspirator Vaudrien to Sir John, which, when once perused, made the statements of Sir John and the conduct of Lady Trevennis as clear

as daylight to my confused mind. I shall not inflict its entire contents upon you, for the substance of its information is all that is absolutely necessary for my narrative.

The letter was written in French, and dated from the 'Dépôt des Condamnés, Paris.' Its purport amounted to this :

When Miss Faynix was at a finishing-school in the Champs Elysées, there happened to be among its masters a M. Vaudrien. A son of the people, saturated with vice, a gambler, and a profligate, this Vaudrien, by dint of forged testimonials and a false character from an accomplice, had managed to get himself engaged by the mistress of the *pensionnat* as music- and singing-master. 'It was charming,' wrote the scoundrel, in the coolest manner, and with the most Rousseau-like frankness, 'to be constantly in the society of these graceful, these coquettish young ladies. They

adored me, and wrote anonymously sonnets to my *beaux yeux*. A girls'-school is no dovecote, and a French school least of any. 'Tis a dangerous age, that of girlhood, when love is romantic, and passion curiosity. Ambitious thoughts passed through my mind, and I resolved to exercise for some tangible end those powers of fascination which the sons of France alone possess to perfection. Of all my pupils none was more beautiful than Helen Faynix. But it was not only her beauty that attracted me: I knew that her father was a statesman, and imagined that necessarily he must be a wealthy man. I laid siege to her heart, and it was not long before the fair citadel succumbed.'

The writer went on to say that Miss Faynix agreed to marry him secretly, if he could contrive a plan.

'I did contrive one. I forged a letter from the schoolmistress to Mr. Faynix,

stating that as Miss Faynix had been out of health for the last three weeks, she thought it advisable that her young pupil should have change of air; and proposed that instead of spending her Easter holidays in London with her father, she should accompany her mistress for a fortnight to Trouville.

‘The schoolmistress begged Mr. Faynix to address his reply to her proposal to his daughter, as she (the mistress) was going away from her school for a few days. At the end of a week a letter came from Mr. Faynix to Miss Faynix, according her permission to go to Trouville, and hoping she would enjoy herself.

‘On the arrival of the Easter holidays Miss Faynix quitted the *pensionnat*, but *not* with her mistress for Trouville, but with her lover for Folkestone, where we were married in the parish church by special

license; an old friend of mine—alas, now in the galleys!—kindly representing himself as “le respectable M. Faynix.”’

The newly-married pair spent their honeymoon at Versailles; and it was not long before Vaudrien discovered that his lovely bride, instead of being an heiress, was only the daughter of a poor younger son.

‘I cursed her for having deceived me, and I know I struck her within ten days of my marriage. She denied having ever deceived me, and she was right; it was but my ignorance of your English social life that had made me imagine that every member of Parliament must be a rich man. What was I to do? To write to Mr. Faynix would be only for me to be disgraced, and to have my wife thrust entirely upon my hands, without any provision for our maintenance; for she said that her father would



disown her then and there the moment he heard of her marriage with an adventurer like myself. She begged me to wait patiently till she was of age, for then a small fortune, left her by her aunt, would be hers; this she would hand over to me for my own use. I resolved to follow her advice till I saw something more satisfactory turn up.

‘She returned to school, and at the end of six months left for England. Nature favoured our secret union, for my wife most fortunately evinced no signs of maternity. Hate had, however, given place to whatever love I may for the moment have felt, and I think the change in our affections was reciprocal.’

For two years after this marriage Vaudrien wandered about the Continent, having been forced to fly from the school to escape imprisonment, as his forged testimonials were

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discovered. He took every opportunity of insulting the feelings of his wife by constantly writing to her at a secret address, and threatening to reveal all to her father if she did not send him money ('an empty threat; for I should have been the worst sufferer; it, however, served my purpose'). This she managed to do by exercising a severe economy in her dress, and selling most of her jewelry. Matters progressed in this way till Mrs. Vaudrien was nineteen and a half; and what between threats 'I never could carry into execution, and fears that I excited but to gain my point, which was always money, money, her life was a not very enviable one.

'One day I received a long letter from my beloved. I enclose it to you, so that you may judge for yourself what a clear business-like wife you—I beg pardon—we have. You will see that she wanted me to


renounce my marriage with her for a future salary of 500*l.* a year, as she intended becoming your wife. I need not say that I consented at once. I sent her back the marriage certificate, and also a forged leaf from the parish register-book at Folkestone, which I pretended to have torn out, so that no clue to our former marriage existed. She was but little more than nineteen, and at that age young women are confiding and unsuspecting. She was perfectly satisfied with what I had done, and four months afterwards became Lady Trevennis.

‘My income has been paid, I am happy to say, most regularly, and latterly I have considerably exceeded it. Whenever I wanted money I asked my—I mean your—wife, and if she refused, I threatened her with exposure. I am sure you will agree with me that I had found a most charming

El Dorado. Besides, you have the satisfaction of knowing that much of your wealth has been expended in an excellent cause—the attempted overthrow of the Empire. Lady Trevennis, I believe, was under the impression that I required this money to start a newspaper in support of the imperial dynasty; I fancy, however, that when she was at Nice a few years ago she had some inkling of my premeditated plot, for which in a few short hours I shall suffer under the guillotine.

‘But this is conjecture.

‘I now ask you to let your memory travel back eight years. You remember you were then suddenly called upon to take the command of an expedition sent out to China. You had just recovered from a bad attack of rheumatic fever, and you thought that a change of air and scene would do you good, especially as you feared that your



heart was affected by your illness. Your lovely wife too thought a sea voyage would be beneficial, and you took her advice. Eight months after your departure you received intelligence that you were the father of a son and heir. You were delighted.

‘By your marriage contract it was stipulated that at your death, and failing any heir to your property, Lady Trevennis would have but a mere trifling annuity, the estate going to your nephew. You can therefore imagine how your wife longed for a son; for your health was then delicate, and you did not promise to live long. Without a son, at your death Lady Trevennis would have been a pauper; *with* a son, she would have the control of the property till he was of age; for that was laid down in the settlement in black and white. During your absence I occasionally saw her ladyship (*absit calumnia!*); for whenever

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I wanted money I applied to her. It was during one of these interviews that she told me of the nature of the marriage settlement, and that at your death she would be left almost a pauper, and so farewell to my goose with the golden eggs.

‘I suggested her going abroad and being confined of an adopted child. She shrunk from the proposal at first, but at last consented. You quitted her at the end of April; and at the end of October, after having avoided all autumnal visiting, and having given out “that she was not strong,” and wearing voluminous crinolines, she started for Nice. I was her medical man, and had the delight of safely delivering her in the middle of December of a fine healthy baby aged two hours, whom I had bought at Mentone from a poor woman who had just been confined. He was christened Reginald Wellesley Trevennis, and is re-

garded by all as your son. He is not. He is the son of a peasant, Antonio Faleri, at Mentone, and I enclose you his receipt for 200 francs, which sum I gave him in exchange for his child.

‘I have now, excellent sir, nothing more to add to this confession. I have enclosed you every reference respecting my marriage with your wife, and the only clue in my power to the parentage of your so-called son.’

The letter then concluded with a series of ill-timed observations respecting female virtue, and a good deal of blasphemous badinage. It contained, however, a most important postscript regarding me.

It was a long statement, to the effect that I was fully acquainted with the past life of Lady Trevennis—that I was her favoured lover; that I had gone to Paris to implore this Vaudrien, after his conviction, not to

reveal anything regarding his marriage with Helen Faynix; and had promised, in Lady Trevennis's name, either for himself, should he be acquitted, or for his mother, should he be convicted, a large sum of money; and concluded by abusing me in the most scurrilous manner, as being utterly unworthy of the position in which I was placed, &c.

'And so,' thought I, 'it is on the baseless charge of a villain that I am to be hastily sent away! I shall speak first, though, to Mr. Faynix.'

But my thoughts were occupied more at that moment about her whom I had been accustomed to call Lady Trevennis than about myself. I carefully re-read Vaudrien's letter, and considered again its contents. It may appear odd to you, but even after knowing what I did about her, my love remained the same, or rather stronger



than ever, for I deeply felt for her impending disgrace, and feared her mind might give way.

I laid the blame of her past conduct not on herself, but on others. It was the fault of her French school, of Vaudrien, of her worldly home, of her father forcing her to marry Sir John—in fact, the fault of every one but herself. You who have never loved cannot have an idea how tenacious the mind is with regard to its first impressions where love is concerned, even against the overwhelming appearance of facts.

From the very first I loved Lady Trevennis, and my mind had evolved from its imaginative faculties a host of ideal attributes about her which it seemed utterly incapable of getting rid of, even when convinced that they were untrue! Was this madness on my part? The doctors have

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since told me it was. But what is love but madness? And yet men believe in it, praise it, and follow it day after day as ardently as ever. Fools!





## CHAPTER II.

MAD, MY MASTERS, MAD !

‘ God help thee, Ruth !—such pains she had,  
That she for half a year was mad.’

**I** SHALL pass briefly over the results consequent upon the perusal of Vaudrien’s letter. The shock had been too intense for Lady Trevennis’s nervous system. The sudden revelation of what she considered would have been henceforth a dead secret ; the abyss of shame and disgrace into which she was about to be hurled after having scaled the topmost pinnacle of the temple of fashion ; and, spread out

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before her like a map, the awful future of dishonour and scorn and pitiless rejection by the hands of the very women who had bowed down before her, fêted and worshipped her,—were all too much for her health (already enervated by the late hours and sensuous luxuries of society) to bear without giving way. At the end of three days spent in unavailing efforts to induce Sir John to break his stern resolve, Lady Trevennis went raving mad.

Dr. Luna Zanee, the celebrated ‘mad doctor,’ who, if anything, was rather madder than his patients, was at once sent for; and she, who had been but a few days ago to all appearance an accomplished well-bred lady of fashion, was placed in the doctor’s brougham with her hands tied, her beautiful hair cut, and now no longer a woman, but a yelling cursing fiend, who shrieked out damnation at every passer-by

and at every lamp-post on the road to Richmond, where Dr. Zanee's *maison de santé* was situated, in which she was about to be confined.

In vain had I spoken to Mr. Faynix and to Sir John about myself. They declined to hear me say a word in my defence, but condemned me, without examination and without trial, for being the criminal lover of the once-called Lady Trevennis. Both Mr. Faynix and Sir John fully believed that I was perfectly cognisant that Vaudrien was the husband of Lady Trevennis, and that I had gone over to Paris to make terms with him, so that he might not reveal his marriage at Folkestone.

They were, however, perfectly ignorant of Lady Trevennis's complicity in the discovery of the conspiracy, and indeed Vaudrien himself, in his letter to his wife, also seemed to be unaware of the fact. Find-

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ing that neither Sir John nor Mr. Faynix would listen to me for a moment, or pay heed to my protestations of innocence, I quitted Princes-gardens the next day. I did not like to say that I knew who my accuser was, because it would not have been particularly agreeable for me to have confessed that I had read Vaudrien's letter to Sir John. Mr. Faynix and the Admiral told me (after one of my protestations that the accusation they made against me was a gross insult to Lady Trevennis and to myself), that they 'had very good grounds for believing my guilt from information they had received about me.'

I demanded to know the name of my accuser, but they declined to furnish me with it. The worst was, that during Lady Trevennis' violent fits of hysterical mania, she kept on calling me by name, and, being perfectly unconscious of what she said,

unfortunately prefaced it with terms of endearment.

Scientific men say that light travels with a rapidity that is unequalled by anything else in the universe. They may be right, for aught I know to the contrary ; but if I had a bet on the subject, I should feel inclined to back scandal as the quicker traveller of the two. At all events, four-and-twenty hours after the scene between Sir John and his wife had taken place, everybody in town knew of the decline and fall of Lady Trevennis. It came upon society like a thunderclap, and shook that collective body of all who are wealthy or well-born to its very foundations. All kinds of reports at first got about (how, Heaven knows ; but how does anything 'get about' ? It is sufficient for us to know that things *do* get about ; and happy is the man who has found his own case an exception to the

rule). One was, that 'Lady Trevennis had bolted with young Harry Disney;' another, that 'she had eloped with Edgeware;' a third, that 'she had run away with her French cook and all Trevennis' diamonds;' and so on.

Though these reports varied in their details, their conclusion was the same—that Lady Trevennis had disgraced herself. Before a week was out, everybody knew all about her previous marriage with Vaudrien, and her consequent insanity. Not a word was said in her favour, not an expression of pity followed the mention of her name; society ran her down and abused her, as it had but one short week before praised her to the skies, and worshipped her with every act of social adoration. The very women who eight days ago were 'dying' to be introduced to her, and exercised all the wiles of social diplomacy to get cards for her balls and break-



fasts, were the very first to turn round upon her, and to hurl upon her unfortunate head every disparaging epithet that their tongues could mention.

The downfall of Lady Trevennis caused a temporary reaction to set in against the splendid extravagance and princely festivities that had characterised the reign of the hostess of Double Zero House and her followers over the domain of fashion. Ostentation gave place to quietness, and a subdued kind of social hospitality became for a time the order of the day; much to the dislike of the plutocracy, who would have rather preferred New York customs and manners to the prim economical sort of splendour that was now introduced.

The truth was, that society was for a time ashamed of itself and its past excesses, and tried to atone by a Louis XIV. kind of severity for a worse than a Louis XIV. free-

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dom and licentiousness. Improper novels were tabooed, and French novels were only to be read in secret. Married women were reminded that they had taken a vow once upon a time to cleave only to their husbands, and that society intended to keep its eye upon them for the future; and woe betide them if they again offended (how *very* severe society is when it takes it into its head to be so!) The leaders of the *demi-monde* were to be annihilated; and young men were told to behave themselves, and to drop all their swagger. Nothing could now be more severely decorous than the dresses of the women—indeed, ladies were as careful to hide their voluptuous charms from the world as a bankrupt is to conceal his assets from his creditors. A religious movement too set in; all the High Churches were crowded with fair worshippers, and Retreats and Sisterhoods

numbered among their members many a weary heart tired or disgusted with the world. In short, society resolved to mend its ways and to pay its devoirs to Lady St. James, whose chaste simplicity and quiet *ton* were so infinitely preferable to the frenchified extravagance of that 'disgraceful creature;' for so the late Lady Trevennis was now very properly called by the fair sex.

It was impossible that a woman in the former position of Lady Trevennis could have been separated from her husband without the fact attracting an immense amount of attention. I believe that no divorce or elopement of the present century ever caused half as much interest and gossip as the nullity of Sir John's marriage; and when it became known that not only had Lady Trevennis committed bigamy, but that she had also forced upon her husband

a supposititious child, scandal was at fever-heat.

Mr. Faynix desired that matters should be kept as quiet as possible; but in Sir John's eyes this was impossible. Had little Reggie not been palmed on the Admiral as his son, I believe that the Baronet would have let his so-called wife bear his name, and have done all in his power to shield her from disgrace. But it was necessary that it should be clearly exposed that Master Trevennis was no son of Sir John's, in order that Coombe Royal and all the rest of the property should, without any dispute, descend at the death of the present proprietor to their legitimate heir, who was a Captain Trevennis of the —th Hussars, and a nephew of Sir John's.

At first, when Sir John informed Lady Trevennis that he intended seeking the protection of the law, he was under the impres-

sion that it would be necessary for him to appear in the Divorce Court. The Admiral knew far more about a court-martial than he did how to get rid of a wife who was no wife.

It was in vain at first that his lawyer told him that the Divorce Court was not the tribunal before which he should appear ; but that if he *wanted* the case to go into court, all he had to do was to file a bill for a criminal prosecution. But Sir John wanted nothing of the kind ; all he wished was to be separated from his wife in a proper judicial manner ; and the only judge who could sever the bonds of matrimony was Sir Testwell-Testwell, and, law or no law, he would be properly divorced by the special judge whose duty it was to perform that little business, as he had been properly married by a clergyman. Everything should be *en règle*. He had been united to Helen

Faynix by the church ; he should be separated from her by the law.

‘But I wish, Sir John, to get you separated according to law,’ replied the family solicitor, who knew that the Admiral was as pig-headed and obstinate as most sailors ; ‘only leave it to me, and all will be simple enough. Your marriage *primâ facie* is no marriage, and there is no difficulty at all in the matter. And indeed,’ said the solicitor, looking over a long document, ‘it is very fortunate that you have *not* to go through the Divorce Court to obtain your separation, for it could not possibly be done this season.’ At last Sir John agreed to leave the matter in the hands of his solicitor.

The solicitor was quite right in telling Sir John that he was very fortunate in not having, as many husbands had lately had to do, to go through the Divorce Court, for


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at the time of which I am writing divorces were very fashionable. Sir Testwell-Testwell was so overworked, that a waggish M.P. recommended that a bill should be brought in to lighten his labours, by requiring every mother-in-law to give to her future son-in-law a written warranty for four years that her daughter was sound, healthy, not padded, of unexceptionable character, and free from vice ; the warranty false, the marriage to be *de facto* void. Adultery and elopements had of late been so common, that the newspapers hardly condescended to give them more than a passing paragraph. The consequence was, that at this time the list of cases before the Divorce Court was crowded.

There was Clapham *v.* Clapham, Brixton, and two other co-respondents ; Smith *v.* Smith and four co-respondents ; Peckwater *v.* Peckwater, Wadham Groves, Law-

son, St. Anthony, Roberts, and Simon-Pure (this was *the* case that was going to astonish the world); and then there was pretty Mrs. Islington's case, who had bolted with a captain of a Lancer regiment; and Lady Streatham (pious old Streatham's young wife), who had gone off with Mr. Hobbs-Malte (senior partner in the brewery of Malte, Granes, and Masham); the elopement of Mrs. O'Doodle with the young Marquis of Glenarvon; besides a host of other cases, anxiously waiting to have their dirty linen washed in public.


The Divorce Court has certainly been a great success, and one wonders how we could have got on without it in former times. The nature of the causes that come before it, and the publicity afforded to all those of a racy character, speak very highly of the morality and good taste of our country. Nor have the British people been slow






to appreciate the inestimable advantages arising from the establishment of this eminent tribunal. Previous to its institution, we were accustomed to look upon matrimony as an almost permanent arrangement between man and woman, divorce being then a tedious and expensive matter ; there was also an idea afloat, that ‘those whom God had joined together man could not put asunder ;’ and so married folks jogged on as well as they could, bearing their marriage-yoke with submission and resignation. But the progress of civilisation, or artificiality—for the terms are synonymous—demanded that the laws of matrimony should be reformed, and divorce made easy, for the multitude.

The requirements of society were listened to by the legislature, and an Act of Parliament was passed by virtue of which marriage ceases to be a binding tie, its dis-



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solution becoming simply a question of female diplomacy and arrangement. Mrs. Jones, after two years' wedlock with Mr. Jones, finds that he is not all she could wish ; but, on the contrary, she discerns in the face, conduct, and character of Captain Browne all that a fond woman can desire. Captain Browne arranges to elope with her, of course making a solemn promise that he marries her after she is a *divorcée* ; and one fine day Jones comes home and finds on his dressing-table a small note, saying that the wife of his bosom prefers the bosom of Captain Browne, and bids him, perhaps, a kindly farewell for ever. Jones retires from his club and society for a week, and then enters the world again pale and scowling, and gives out that he has been over half the Continent to catch the guilty couple, and shoot Browne. But he has done no such thing:



all that he has done has been to place the matter in the hands of his solicitor, and to 'go in for swingeing damages.' The divorce decreed by the court, the three months' interval passed, Captain Browne marries the late Mrs. Jones, or jilts her, according to his views of honour and the ardour of his attachment.

My dear Atholl, he is a wise husband who nowadays can keep his own wife. All praise be accorded to our legislature !

As Sir John's lawyer said, there was no difficulty in annulling the marriage, for marriage there never had been *ab initio*.

Mr. Faynix, during his daughter's illness, attempted to make no defence ; on the contrary, he was her bitterest enemy, and entirely sympathised with the Admiral. It was proved that the marriage between Helen Faynix and Ernestine Vaudrien *did*

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take place at Folkestone according to special license, which the friend of Vaudrien, who represented 'le respectable M. Faynix,' had obtained from Doctors' Commons. It was also proved on the appearance of the *real* father and mother of little Reggie, who had come all the way from Mentone as witnesses, that they had given up their newly-born infant, who was a boy, to M. Vaudrien for the sum of two hundred francs; thus corroborating the statement of the conspirator in his letter to Sir John, that Reggie was a supposititious child. Unfortunately, too, for Lady Trevennis, the detective employed by her to track Vaudrien came of his own accord to Sir John's lawyer, and gave evidence. His testimony soon showed that the reason why Lady Trevennis was so eager to convict her first husband was, that she thought either his imprisonment or execution would remove him entirely

from the scene, and so preserve her secret undiscovered.

I must own that Sir John acted very well towards his former wife after his marriage was annulled. He offered to settle 1000*l.* a year upon her (which Mr. Faynix however refused to accept), and to adopt Reggie on his taking the name of Conway, which was at once agreed to. Mr. Faynix and Lady Ann quitted Double Zero House, which belonged to Sir John, very shortly after the arrival of Vaudrien's letter, and took a house in Cromwell-road.

Mr. Faynix resolved, that, should his daughter recover (which he hoped she would not), he would disown her for ever. Her conduct had been abominable and utterly unworthy of forgiveness. Lady Ann was the only one of Lady Trevennis' numerous friends and acquaintances who ever condescended to go down to Rich-

mond to see the poor patient, and in nearly all her visits she was accompanied by me.

After my dismissal from Mr. Faynix's service, I resolved to devote myself entirely to my neglected art. I was welcomed back by my artist friends, and once more set hard to work. But my celebrated picture of Lady Trevennis, and also my criticism on Turner's pictures, which had appeared and had been a success, made me free from all those anxieties and heart-burnings about obtaining a market for my pictures which had been my lot before my name became known. The dealers were only too ready to buy the productions of my brush, and I saw my way to obtain not only an income, but a fair fortune. Instead of having a studio in town, I obtained lodgings at Richmond, in order to be near the woman whom, with all her faults, I still devotedly loved. Dr. Zanee and I became great

friends, and he permitted me to see Lady Trevennis (for so I must still call her) every day; this permission he granted me all the more readily, because he saw my visits exercised a most beneficial influence upon his fair patient.

The malady under which Lady Trevennis was labouring was called by the professional men, who at the commencement of her illness met in solemn conclave to examine the nature of her disease, hysterical mania of a most acute description. They all concurred in stating that the brain was perfectly uninjured, at least that there was no cerebral disease; and that her complete recovery was only a question of time. For the first four months Lady Trevennis was entirely unconscious of everything around her, and it required all the vigilance of her two nurses to prevent her from doing herself some grievous harm during her violent out-

breaks. She recognised no one, and had to be fed and treated like a little child. At the end of about four months all the violent symptoms passed away, and she would remain for hours in a fixed attitude, chattering to herself the most incoherent nonsense. She was still perfectly insane, but her insanity was of a far more manageable description. She would eat without being fed, partially dress herself, and walk about in Dr. Zanee's garden among his other patients without exhibiting any very striking peculiarities of derangement, beyond incessantly talking to herself the most inconceivable nonsense in the world.

She had been confined at Richmond about eight months when a gradual change for the better appeared. She had now ceased her continual gabbering, and seldom talked at all, occasionally relieving her intense silence by violent fits of sobbing. Dr. Zanee



now said that it might be a good thing if some of her friends were to see her occasionally; and it was at this period of her illness that Lady Ann and I paid our first visit to her. Mr. Faynix refused to see his daughter, and hoped that her insanity would be permanent; for as only disgrace and shame awaited her recovery, it were better, he said, that she never recovered, to realise her deplorable position.

Lady Trevennis was seated in her private sitting-room when we called on her. She was looking very pale and rather thin, but otherwise her illness had not detracted from her extreme beauty. On the contrary, the sad solemnity of her face, with its large melting eyes, gave it a more spiritual expression than ever.

She recognised us, but greeted us coldly and impassively. Lady Ann kissed her most affectionately, but she did not return

the salute; and though she shook hands with me, and answered rationally all our queries, the whole interview seemed to be a burden to her. She opened her lips only to answer our questions, but otherwise never attempted to converse. Occasionally she would lean back against the pillows which propped her, and look at us long and earnestly with a puzzled sort of expression, as if her mind were trying to penetrate the cloudy atmosphere which surrounded it. And then she would withdraw her gaze slowly and lingeringly, and heave a deep sigh, as if she had failed in her effort to comprehend her position and why we came to see her. Altogether it was a most sad visit, and one that moved Lady Ann to tears. Indeed, that lady resolved not to call again upon her niece till she was in a more progressive state of recovery.

I may add here, that Lady Ann was per-

fectly ignorant of the accusations that both Sir John and Mr. Faynix had made against me with respect to my relationship with Lady Trevennis. She was deeply moved by the wicked conduct of her niece; but she said that nothing would cause her to disown 'her dead sister's child,' but, on the contrary, she would do all in her power to protect her, and to tone down her father's wrath.

As for Mr. Faynix, I knew perfectly well that he was so wrapped up in the world, that nothing would induce him to compromise his position, even though he was the father of the guilty one, by pardoning her. Besides, the assumption of the character of the stern parent, whose ideas of virtue were so severe and uncompromising that he could never reconcile it to his conscience to pardon even his own daughter, was a very good card to play, and made him immensely

popular among the very rigid classes who, as a rule, love to atone for their own peccadilloes by the exhibition of the most intense severity towards all who are unmistakably found out. And the rigid classes constitute an influence amongst us which every statesman does well to cultivate. No one knew that better than Mr. Faynix.

Every day I paid a visit to Zanee House, and left some fruit or pictures for Lady Trevennis. I did not make a point of seeing her ; but if she were walking in the grounds accompanied by her maid, I used occasionally to go up and walk by her side. Sometimes she would take my arm and pace up and down in perfect silence—a silence which now and then she would break by making a remark such as ‘ You don’t wear patent boots now,’ ‘ Is my carriage at the door ?’ ‘ What odd people there

are here !' &c. ; but as a rule she seldom spoke.

I remember once, when she saw me approaching her with some grapes, that she stopped in her walk till I came up to her, and then put her arm in mine, and said three times ' Good boy !' looking up at my face the while. Her expression was not vacant, but it was stern and set as that of a statue, and she never once smiled.

It was the first time that I had ever been inside a lunatic asylum ; and knowing the nature of the malady that overshadowed my own family, I regarded with interest everything around me, and wondered whether, like so many of my ancestors, I should one day be an inmate of such a place.


Shortly before Lady Trevennis' insanity, I had read a foolish and exaggerated book which was supposed to convey an accurate

representation of life in a private asylum. Nothing, so far as I saw, could be more grossly unjust and untrue than the writer's descriptions. Instead of cruelty, I observed the greatest kindness; instead of neglect and inattention, the most thoughtful and delicate care; and on every occasion the patients were treated as if they were sane beings, their complaints gravely listened to, and all their remarks and opinions heard with deference.

Zanee House was a large square Elizabethan building standing in its own extensive and well-kept grounds. It was divided into two distinct establishments; one for ladies, the other for gentlemen; and as each patient paid something like 500*l.* a year, all the appointments were in excellent style. Dr. Zanee made me, as it were, free of the house, and took me all over his establishment. I had imagined that a *mad-house*


was an awful place, where the inmates were confined in padded cells, and were dangerous to approach. I expected to see their eyes starting from their heads, their tongues lolling out of their mouths covered with saliva, and to hear nothing but demoniacal yells. On the faces of all there would be written in the plainest letters, 'This patient is *mad*.' I saw nothing of the kind. This is what I saw.

I went over the male establishment first, and to my amazement entered a large room fitted up like a club smoking- and billiard-room, in which were some twenty men. Some were seated in easy-chairs reading newspapers or magazines, others were playing chess and smoking, and about half a dozen were playing pool. As for observing any indications of insanity, I might have been in the smoking-room of the 'New Mixture.'



On a closer acquaintance with these gentlemen, I discovered that they were entirely deficient in sensibility. They would openly make remarks upon each other without the slightest compunction, and without appearing to produce any effect. There was a harshness and want of harmony about their voices when they spoke, which was very disagreeable.

I was introduced to several of the patients who were playing pool, and they asked me whether I would take a ball just as rationally as my friends Brown and Jones would ask me at the 'New Mixture.' I played two games, and had some little conversation with the players. They all said that 'they intended to leave, as it was the greatest nonsense their being there,' and looked upon their confinement as something too ridiculous to be borne. Indeed they were so rational, that on quitting the





room, I said to Dr. Zanee that they appeared perfectly sane. He replied, that all those whom we had just seen were hopeless monomaniacs; and that if they were set free, one man would assert his claim to the throne; another would bother the Chancellor of the Exchequer to pay him his pension for discovering how to settle the National Debt; another would at once shoot his elder brother, and lay claim to the property; another would go about preaching that he was the apostle St. Paul, and looking upon the cathedral as his own peculiar residence, and insult the Dean and Chapter; and so on.

Passing through the writing-room, where several men were writing letters to their friends or the commissioners, proving that they were perfectly sane by a concatenation of the most insane ideas and expressions, we issued on to a large


kind of play-ground, where several patients were playing foot-ball, cricket, or going in for gymnastics. Many of them were young officers who were recovering from the effects of sunstroke or delirium tremens; and the doctor pointed out here and there a few who had caused him no little trouble, owing to their violence. They all appeared as if they were amused; and one or two with whom I spoke seemed perfectly aware that they were not right in their mind, but hoped soon to be perfectly well.

Among them were several patients who had been under confinement for the last twenty years, and I was introduced to one who had been a distinguished scholar, but had been driven mad by the study of astronomy. He talked most sanely upon every subject but the one on which he was insane—astronomy; and yet he passed his

days in picking up all the bits of iron and copper he could find, and putting them in his bed. Whenever a kettle or croquet hoops were lost, they were invariably found in his possession, secreted somewhere. Some of these men had their attendants (keepers) behind them, but others were allowed to go about without any restraint. I had a long chat on sculpture with an artist suffering from a sunstroke, who, only ten hours ago, had nearly succeeded, when one of his paroxysms came on, in murdering his keeper. I noticed that two powerful fellows were behind him, and followed him wherever he went.

‘And where are your wild raging homicidal patients?’ I asked Doctor Zanee.

‘I refuse to take them in,’ he replied; ‘but I have two or three who are terribly affected with suicidal mania. Come in here;’ and knocking at a door, we entered




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a perfect artist's studio. Pictures hung all over the walls, busts and statuettes stood on brackets, and numerous engravings were scattered about the floor. In the centre of the room was a very pale delicate-looking young man painting, and seated behind him was a servant reading.

‘Good-morning, Sir Frederick ; I’ve come to introduce to you a brother artist, Mr. Disney.’

He had heard of me, and had gone with Dr. Zanee to see my pictures at the Academy. We had a long conversation together ; and both from his remarks and the exquisite finish of his paintings, he was evidently a most accomplished man. As we rose to take our leave, he begged me to come and visit him again, as his existence was so infernally monotonous. I promised to do so ; and as I quitted his room, I said to Dr. Zanee,



‘Now, Dr. Zanee, nothing will convince me that that man is out of his mind.’

‘He is, though,’ replied the doctor ; ‘and I fear hopelessly so, for his insanity is hereditary. His great-grandfather, grandfather, father, and his two brothers have all committed suicide ; and if Sir Frederick were left alone five minutes with any murderous weapon near him, he would be a dead man. One man watches him all day, and accompanies him everywhere ; and another man sits up with him all night, so that he should not strangle himself in the dark.’

What an awful existence ! and the horrible thought came across me, Suppose his fate should be mine ! Dr. Zanee was then perfectly unconscious that insanity was in my family, otherwise, as he afterwards said, nothing would have induced him to take me over his establishment.

A high wall divided the gentlemen’s

department from that of the ladies. Opening a door let into the wall, we entered the grounds set apart for the soft sex—alas, soft indeed!

Here, as it should be, everything was of a more elegant and tasteful character. The lawn was well kept, and the emerald greenness of the turf was relieved with beds of gay and blooming flowers. At the end of the lawn was a large orchard leading into a kind of park, where many and many a silent walk I had with Lady Trevennis, hoping and praying that soon the light of reason would illumine her beauteous face.

Young ladies were taking their constitutitionals, accompanied by their nurses, in the grounds of the orchard or in the park; some talking and gesticulating to themselves, others with heads bent low and their arms behind them, looking as if Melancholy had

indeed marked them for her own. On the lawn were several ladies playing croquet, whilst others were engaged in lawn billiards or archery.

I went up to them, and was introduced. Here again I noticed that those who appeared most rational were always those who were the most hopelessly insane, according to Dr. Zanee, who certainly was a great authority on the subject.

Being invited to take mallets and join a party of ladies (two of them were titled, whilst the third was the young wife of a bishop) in playing croquet, I could hardly believe at first that I was in a lunatic asylum, and not at an afternoon party. Everything was propriety and decorum; indeed, those poor mad ladies had infinitely more *retenues* than many of their sane sisters with whom I had played croquet in — Square or at — House.

It was only as the game proceeded that I discovered a few eccentricities in their behaviour. And yet every one of these ladies was a victim of an almost hopeless monomania. One thought she was not the Queen, but the *presence* of the Queen, and was treated with the greatest deference by the doctor; another had set all her mother's household by the ears by her constant accusations that her sisters had poisoned her; and so on; all of them labouring more or less under the most distressing fixed delusions.

The system Dr. Zanee adopted was the one now almost universally prevalent in the treatment of the insane—that of extreme kindness. I saw no strait-waistcoats, no chains or bands, no patients tied to their beds, no signs of violent remedies anywhere. Indeed, the doctor said that he never used such a thing as a strait-waistcoat, except, as in Lady Trevennis' case, to remove the



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patient from one place to another. Of course I am only describing what I saw at Zanee House, and am perfectly ignorant whether all other *maisons de santé* are conducted on the same plan ; if they are, all I can say is, that instead of abusing them, we ought to be thankful that such places exist as homes for our afflicted fellow-creatures.





## CHAPTER III.


### MARRIAGE.

'For, indeed, I know  
Of no more subtle master under heaven  
Than is maiden passion for a woman :  
For I was ever virgin save for thee.'

**D**URING my residence at Richmond, I had been hard at work painting. I was engaged on a picture of Andromeda, and I flattered myself that my rendering of the damsel chained to the rocks, with the sea just leaving her feet, was, if not novel, at least most artistic. I knew that my forte was in colouring, and I lavished all my talents in depicting the nude figure of the captive maid as life-like as possible.

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I succeeded so well, that the first great dealer who came down to see what I was about gave a start of agreeable surprise when I took him into my studio, and showed my canvas. He offered me 500*l.* for it when completed; but I quietly told him that nothing but twice that amount would content me. In vain he replied that such a sum would be large even for a first-rate artist. I quietly told him that I considered myself a first-rate artist, and that my constitutional modesty had never yet gone so far as to make me depreciate my own productions. It was, I said, a matter of indifference whether he bought it or no; for I knew that Lord Cottonopolis, Sir Threyde Real, or Mr. Fluff, if they once saw it, would eagerly compete to be its purchaser. Three times this dealer came all the way from London to my studio, in the hope that I would reduce my terms; and the third time



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he bought it for the sum asked. You may remember that it was exhibited in Bond-street, and that it was finally sold to the wealthy Mr. Fluff for 3000*l.*, who is also the present proprietor of my first picture of Lady Trevennis.

It was about the end of May that, paying my customary visit to Zanee House, after an absence of a few days, I was met by the doctor, who said that his fair patient was now perfectly recovered. A great change had taken place the last few days in her condition. She was still grave and subdued, but she talked with him quite rationally about herself; said she knew she had been out of her mind; smiled occasionally, and asked when Mr. Disney would call again (for I had been away for the last fortnight). This was excellent news; and with a beating heart I knocked at the door of her room.

‘Come in!’ I heard the voice of Lady Trevennis say, now free from all the harshness and discordance attendant upon insanity, and as sweetly clear and ringing as it ever was.

She was dressed in a plain black silk over a lavender silk skirt, and was seated in an easy-chair reading a novel. She rose up with her dear old smile on her face, and greeted me most warmly. As far as I could see, she was completely herself again; and, thanks to a false chignon that her maid had bought for her, she looked just the same—perhaps a little paler and sadder—as I had seen her at Double Zero House. She was quite alone when I entered her room.

‘How good and kind you have been to me,’ she said, smiling sweetly upon me, ‘in coming so often to see me! Do you know, when you used to walk about with me, I could never make out why you were with

me, and why I was here. Sometimes I thought I was at Coombe Royal, and I could *not* understand why so many people were walking about the grounds without my having given them permission. Ah, thank goodness, it is all over now! the past seems like a distressing dream, from which I have just awakened.'

'Would that it were!' thought I. 'Yes, you have been very ill,' said I.

'Very ill,' she replied, looking meaningly at me; 'yes, I know what has been the matter with me perfectly, so do not attempt to deceive me. And now, Harry, sit down beside me, and tell me everything, *everything*,' she added, laying great stress on the word.

'My dear Lady Trevennis—' I began.

'Hush! you must not call me *that*. I know from Dr. Zanee, with whom I had some conversation yesterday, that I have

lost all claim to that name and title. The name of Vaudrien,' and she shuddered, 'is too odious to me. Your kindness to me,' and her eyes rested on me very kindly, 'makes you a privileged person—you may call me Helen.'

'Well, Helen,' said I, smiling, 'let the dead past bury its dead, and let us talk about the future. How thankful I am to see you looking so well!'

'The dead past can never be buried with me,' said she sadly, 'for my future will always be coloured by it. I have committed an act which the world can never forgive; as long as I live, I am a social pariah—an outcast. For me there is no forgiveness. I know that perfectly well; and since I have recovered from my illness, I have thought of all that is past, and all that is in store for me in the future. I have prepared myself, and steeled

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my heart for the worst. Now answer me truly all that I ask of you.

I was a slave in her hands, and could do nothing but obey her, for she was adopting her old imperious tone with me. She began :

‘Of all my relatives, I have seen but Lady Ann ; of all my friends, you. Where is my father ?’

‘In town.’

‘He refuses to see me, then ?’

I made no reply.

‘Your silence is sufficient answer to my question. You see, my dear Harry, what I have to expect from the world when my own *father* turns against me ! Is Lord Edge-ware in town ?’

I felt hurt that she asked after him so soon after her recovery ; it looked as if he were such a friend of hers.

‘I believe he is at present in the East,’  
I replied.



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She then asked me about Sir John Trevennis, little Reggie, the fate of her husband, Vaudrien, and various matters connected with her former marriage. I answered all her questions most faithfully, and remained talking to her for about an hour. I then rose up to take my departure, promising to send down Lady Ann to her.

A fortnight after this conversation Lady Ann and her niece went to Tunbridge Wells. There they remained a year.

Like a moth that flutters round a candle, I was never happy unless I could find some excuse for being near the woman I so deeply and, as you thought, so insanely loved. For the first six months of Helen's stay at the Wells, I contented myself with running up to see her occasionally, and bringing her the latest news from town; for she was still of the world, most worldly. But latterly I pretended that the doctors

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had recommended me to take the Tunbridge waters, and remained for months in the fashionable little watering-place, seeing Helen almost daily.

It was then that I determined to ask her to be my wife. I felt sure that she was not indifferent to me, from numerous little circumstances that occurred during my stay ; but that she would marry me, and consent to become my wife, after the history of her past life had been so publicly known, I was not so sure.

More than a year had now elapsed since the arrival of Vaudrien's letter on that awful morning, and all connection between the once fashionable Lady Trevennis and the world had entirely ceased. Not one of her former friends ever wrote to her or recognised her, but everybody cut her most religiously. She knew no one but Lady Ann and myself; and I was

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fully aware that my constant devotion to her, in spite of all the past, had made a deep impression on her. Indeed, she had said to me one day, that I was the truest friend she ever had; but of love neither she nor I ever hinted.

Shortly after I had come to this determination of asking Helen to be my wife, Lady Ann and she removed to Hastings. It was now May.

Mr. Faynix still refused to see his daughter, and expressed his opinion that she should live abroad. He begged that his feelings might be spared, and that she would neither write to him nor wish to see him. I stated to Lady Ann that I would follow her and her niece in a few days to Hastings, and also, in a strictly private conversation that I had with that excellent lady, I told her how unjustly both Mr. Faynix and Sir John had maligned my character; and that

now, as her niece was a free woman, I wished to be allowed opportunities to prefer my suit to her. I also mentioned, in confidence, how deeply I had been attached to Lady Trevennis, almost from the very moment I had seen her; but that I had most carefully avoided exhibiting any signs of this attachment to Lady Trevennis; and that it was an additional and gratuitous insult to Helen for her father and her late husband to accuse her of having encouraged my affection. Lady Ann was deeply moved by what she called 'my honourable and generous conduct' towards her niece, who was now a disgraced woman, and could not entertain any hopes of ever being restored to her proper place in society.

'In marrying my niece, Mr. Disney,' said she, 'I think it right to tell you that such a step is fraught with great risks to you. Helen's past conduct has been most

wicked and abominable ; and though *I* do not disown her, yet I cannot attempt to palliate her guilt ; and all I can say is, that he must be a bold man who will wish her to be his wife.'

'My dear Lady Ann, all I fear is, that Helen will not marry me,' said I.

'I do not know about that,' replied she ; 'for I know she has always liked you. But should she consent to become your wife, you must realise fully your position : the world will never receive her, nor will she be owned by her family.'

'As long as you, dear Lady Ann, do not disown us, I care for the slights of no one else,' said I gushingly. 'Then you will throw no obstacles in the way of my paying my attentions to your niece?'

'Certainly not. We shall be staying at the Victoria, at St. Leonard's : come down when you like. All I ask is, that you con-

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sider fully your own mind, and take other advice than mine or your own before entering upon such a solemn engagement.'

At the end of ten days I was at Hastings with my now almost-complete picture of Andromeda. I called upon Lady Ann and Helen soon after my arrival; and the latter greeted me very kindly, and with a slight air of surprise. Lady Ann certainly afforded me opportunities sufficient to prefer my suit; for, with the exception of occasionally driving out with us, Helen and I were left constantly alone. We rode out in the morning, either into the country or on to the Sussex downs; and sometimes in the afternoon went out for a sail. In the evenings I would read aloud, whilst both ladies were at work; and as the only class of literature Lady Ann ever read was sermons and biographical conversions, a few pages after dinner always had the beneficial

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effect of sending her into a long and somewhat sonorous (may I say snorous?) slumber, which Helen and I took advantage of by indulging in very confidential chats.

We never, as if by mutual consent, referred to the past; and there had sprung up between us, within the last few days, a very tender and expressive style of conversation, which was nothing, if not the harbinger of love. Indeed, from the very moment that I had arrived at Hastings, Helen evinced towards me the most sisterly kindness, which every day deepened into something stronger. It seemed as if she were trying to make some return for the care and attention I had shown her during her illness; for, oddly enough, she remembered all my little presents and little attentions that I had then paid her.

One evening Lady Ann was asleep as usual, and Helen and I were seated near

each other talking—our conversation had turned upon my picture.

‘And so you are really going to resume your profession in downright earnest?’ said she.

‘In downright earnest,’ I replied.

‘And do you consider it conducive to rising in your profession to come down here and waste your time with us?’ asked she, laying down her embroidery and looking softly at me.

Heavens! what a beautiful woman she was! She had on only an ordinary evening dress, which I remember her having worn occasionally at Double Zero House; but it suited her admirably. It was a grenadine barège, cut Marie Stuart fashion, and trimmed with light blue ribbon. Round her swan-like neck was a piece of light blue velvet, to which a crystal locket, with a large sapphire encircled with diamonds,



was stretched. Her abundant hair was set off by a small black bow, placed respect-fully at the side of her head. Her face was slightly flushed, and those wonderfully-expressive eyes of hers were beamed in a kind sort of smile, which added greatly to their beauty.

‘But suppose I hear that I waste my time?’ I rejoined. ‘I paint every morning.’

‘But in London you would paint nearly all day: whilst in Hastings you paint but a few very short hours,’ she said, resuming her work.

‘Ah! but I make far more progress during those short hours here than I should during long ones in town—the light is so much better here: indeed,’ I added carelessly, ‘that was one of the reasons which made me come down here.’

‘And is the light at Hastings better than that at other places?’ she asked, lay-

ing down her work, and looking at me archly.

‘It has the *only* light I care for,’ answered I, looking at her significantly, and seating myself at her feet on a stool.

‘In spite of all its shadows?’ she asked, leaning forward in her chair, and resting her hands on my shoulder.

‘In spite of all its shadows,’ I replied, taking her hands in mine, and kneeling down before her. ‘O Helen, let me love you, and do not forbid me hoping that one day you will be my wife,’ I murmured, burying my head in her lap.

‘Your wife—poor boy!’ said she, stroking my hair with one hand, whilst with the other she caressed my neck. ‘Your wife! And would you link your true pure love with one whose name is Shame, and whose past life has been evil and deceitful? You, young, and perhaps with a famous future

before you, to marry *me*—I who am outside the pale of society?’

‘Society! what do I care for it, except to sneer at its life and maxims? Helen, dear one, all that I care about, and have cared about almost from the very hour when I first saw you, is your own dear self.’

‘You say so now, Harry,’ replied she, resting her forehead on mine, so that her sweet voice breathed on my face whilst she spoke; ‘you say so now; but how would it be when your love cooled, and reflection took its place? Would you not then regret the step you had taken, as many a man has done before you? Remember, I am no simple girl, but a guilty woman, whose past life has been in the world and for the world. I feel sure that a time would come when you would bitterly regret your union with me.’

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‘Never!’ I broke in passionately, and kissing a thousand times the fair face so close to me. ‘Never, my own Helen!—for you are my own, are you not? Let the past be dead, forgotten, never to rise again. The future is before us—before us, with all its new hopes and new scenes. Let us live for that now, my own, and all will again be bright and joyous! We will quit England, and live abroad.’

‘O yes, let us quit England!’ she said, tears starting in her eyes. ‘O, Harry, you are too kind, too generous in all you say and wish. You do not know what agony of mind I have endured when I have thought of the past (and when have I not?), and then looked into the future. It almost made me mad again! To live for ever unloved, despised—a fallen and degraded woman! And now you come and raise me up from the mire, and say, “Be my wife!” Is it for

me to reject this strong true love of yours?—ay, and a love which I knew you bore me when I was—was—Lady Trevennis,’ said she hesitatingly; and it was because I knew it, and because—yes, my Harry—I was not indifferent to it, that I asked you to quit me. Ah, Harry,’ and she rested her arms on my shoulders, clasping her hands behind my neck, and put her soft cheeks to mine, caressing my lips with her own, as she murmured, ‘if the light of my love can make you happy, in spite of its shadowy past, it is yours—all yours!’ and her lips pressed mine in a long, long passionate kiss.

And so, at last, I had won her!—her who from the very first had so twined herself around my heart, that reflection, principle, her past life, were all powerless to quench my constant and unconquerable affection for her. And now she

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was to be mine ; and it was to be my lot to protect and cherish her 'till death us do part,' with the pent-up fulness of my love! How I prayed, and how confident I felt, that the Mrs. Disney of the future would be as different from the Lady Trevennis of the past as light from darkness! You know how my prayer was answered, and how my confidence was rewarded.

It can easily be imagined that the bigamy Lady Trevennis had committed was not allowed to drop into oblivion very quickly. It had caused something far more than a nine days' wonder, and was so rich a piece of scandal that the gossipmongers were not likely to let it die quietly. Indeed, I doubt whether it is even yet dead—a title and a beauty dragged through the mire is a *bonne bouche* not to be obtained every day for the delectation of your gossip *gourmets*.

The press took the matter up, and treated it in the very severe high-moral tone which it always adopts when the voice of the public has shown them which way the wind blows. And the man most ignorant of social meteorology could hardly fail to see that the wind blew dead against the ex-Lady Trevennis.

The *Mixobarbarus* came out very strong in one of its most erudite articles, full of the classical dictionary, the family Bible, and remarks from the most celebrated authors, from Bacon down to Tupper, against the extravagance and dissipation which Lady Trevennis had been mainly instrumental in encouraging. 'Constant readers' of that influential journal, who care to refer back to the date of the Trevennis Tournament, will see in its columns a most eulogistic account of Lady Trevennis and of her splendid hospitalities. One or two

of the weeklies also passed some very severe strictures on the state of society at the present day, and dealt no light measure to the 'unhappy lady.' As for the muck-rakers of the fourth estate—the *Halfpenny Rag*, the *Weekly Dunghill*, and the *Dirty Miscellany*, all of which lived and batted upon social vices—their pages, you may be assured, were not allowed to ignore the matter.

In fact, the bigamy of Lady Trevennis was the talk of the town for days and weeks; riddles (and not very proper ones) were made about it, the clubs teemed with 'anecdotes,' and everybody added here and there something new, which if not true was at least piquant and agreeably seasoned; so that the ball was kept on rolling finely, and the name of Lady Trevennis once mentioned was always sure to enliven a flagging conversation with a host of 'they say,' and 'I am told for a fact;' which invariably



prefaced something that tended to blacken the 'unhappy lady's' character more than she deserved.


This being the case, it required all Mr. Faynix's influence to prevent the Government taking the matter up. The Secretary for Causing Internal Disturbances was placed in an awkward position. A personal friend of Lady Trevennis, and a tender-hearted man to boot, he naturally wished to be as lenient as possible; but unfortunately only two months ago a poor woman had committed bigamy under circumstances, to a great extent, excusable — imagining her husband dead — and the law had passed its usual sentence upon her. The Secretary had been appealed to by the philosophers and philanthropists (a class of people who spend their lives in doing all they can to avert the decrees of justice) to mitigate the woman's sentence; but he had replied that

‘the law must be upheld,’ and refused to listen to the petition.

And now here was the daughter of his own colleague guilty of the same offence, and a rabid press attacking her, and calling on him to institute a prosecution, and reminding him that ‘the law must be upheld’! It was very awkward. And the worst was, that the Attorney-General was most anxious to file a bill against Lady Trevennis immediately after her recovery. For between her ex-ladyship and that distinguished law-officer of the Crown there had been no love lost, on account of Lady Trevennis’ treatment of the lawyer’s wife, who (owing to a partiality which not infrequently causes our counsellors learned in the law to prefer the fair dames of the kitchen to those of the drawing-room) from being his cook, had been elevated to the dignity of his wife.

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Lady Trevennis had invariably snubbed this lady; you can therefore imagine that now, when an opportunity offered itself to the lawyer's wife of avenging the slights put upon her, she did her utmost to urge her husband to make the Government take the matter up. Indeed, if it had not been for the most strenuous efforts of Mr. Faynix, Lady Trevennis would have found herself committed for trial at the Central Criminal Court for bigamy. The majesty of the law, though not in this instance 'upheld,' was deemed to be fully compensated by the next poor man or woman, accused of a like offence, receiving a rather more than usually severe sentence. It is, however, a great mistake to suppose that in England there is one law for the great, and another for the poor: there is, in reality, only one law—that for the poor.



The wealthy get off either by small fines or great bail, and occasionally by interest.

I told Lady Ann that I had proposed to her niece, and that she had accepted me. She congratulated me very gravely, and hoped that when we were married we would live abroad. I know that she read Helen a very severe lecture about her future conduct, and called me an 'infatuated young man,' for my *fiancée* told me this herself the next morning. Helen had a small fortune of 10,000*l.* left her by an aunt, and this was all that she possessed; for I insisted that the thousand a year which Sir John had again offered to allow her should not be accepted. She said that she never intended to accept any provision from Sir John whatever, and had not been aware that he had made such an offer. She wished to be dependent on me, and on nobody else.

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I wrote to Mr. Faynix, informing him that I was about to marry his daughter, and hoped that he had no objection to the union. I also stated that I had every prospect of believing that I might rely on my profession to furnish us with a very comfortable income. I received this reply:

‘Sir,—It is a matter of pure indifference to me whether Mrs. Vaudrien marries you and goes to the devil, or whether you marry her and go to the devil.

‘I am, sir,

‘Your most obedient humble servant,

‘G. FAYNIX.’

I showed this letter to Helen; and after its perusal she never mentioned her father's name again to me.

We were married at the end of July, in a church in Warrior-square, by a young

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curate; and the next day the papers stated that the 'notorious daughter of Mr. Faynix had married the rising young artist Henry Disney, to whom she had been long attached.'






## CHAPTER IV.

### IN THE PYRENEES.

'Come, live with me, and be my love;  
And we will all the pleasures prove  
That hills and valleys, dale and field,  
And all the craggy mountains yield.'

HE next three months we spent in the Pyrenees. We visited Pau, Eaux Bonnes, Luchon; and the more we saw of that splendid belt of mountains—less in altitude than the Alps, but infinitely their superior in verdure and harmony of scenery—the more we wondered why, to the generality of Englishmen, it should be a *terra incognita* during the summer months.

Ah, those were happy days! Not a cloud arose to disturb the serenity of our married life. It seemed as if we vied with each other only in our endeavours to increase our mutual happiness. In Helen's affection for me there was something more than the ordinary love that a woman bears to her husband—there was a tone of gratitude in it which was very touching. She never once gainsaid a single proposition that I made; but in all her actions towards me there was a gentle submissiveness, a softness of spirit, very unlike the haughty Lady Trevennis of old. Her love was more like the devotion an attached master receives from a slave he has manumitted, than the feeling that exists, or is supposed to exist, between man and wife. At times this submissiveness was almost painful to me, knowing as I did the real character of the woman, and I used laugh-





ingly to remonstrate with her about it; but she would only reply to me by twining her arms round my neck, and saying, 'My own, I wish to be subject to no other will but yours; and my only delight is in trying to obey your wishes. Whom have I in the whole wide world but you now?' and there was a tone of exquisite sadness in the way she said *now*.


I made a point of never alluding to the past; and though my curiosity was not yet satisfied with regard to various little details connected with her former life, I never permitted myself to take any opportunity to gratify it. Indeed, I did all in my power to make my wife forget that any cloud of shame hung over her, and was ever keenly on my guard not to allude to anything that might awaken bitter recollections. That she felt most sensitively her position, I could have no doubt. There was a

morbid nervousness about her, which made her shun every probability of meeting any one. We never walked out on the promenade; we never dined at *table-d'hôte*; we never attended balls, theatres, or concerts. We lived during that joyous honeymoon entirely alone, and our thoughts seldom extended beyond our two selves. Happy in each other, the world could give us no greater source of enjoyment than to leave us alone. Helen, in her turn, never alluded to the past in the slightest degree, and I never heard her ask after any of her relations or friends, except Lady Ann. She never referred either to events that had occurred at Double Zero House or to the part she had played in society. By a sort of tacit consent, the past was a tabooed subject between us.

I spent my mornings painting—for I was engaged on the portrait of a handsome


Pyrenean peasant—and Helen would either read aloud to me, or play the piano, or else occupy herself in working and talking to me. In the afternoons we went out riding over some gorgeous mountain-pass, attended by my model in his handsome Pyrenean dress, to inspect some Spanish village or church ; or else we had a sharp trot along the diligence road to some neighbouring town. In the evenings we would go out for a stroll, and get sentimental, and perhaps a cold, watching the rich verdure of the mountain, and the fine summit of the Pic du Ger bathed in the silvery sheen of the moon.

For we lived chiefly at the pretty little village of Eaux Bonnes, perhaps the most fashionable watering-place in the Pyrenees, not excepting Luchon. We were charmed with its quietness (for, like all *severely* fashionable places, it is very quiet), its delightful environs full of de-



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licious rides, and its numerous walks cut into the mountain sides. It was also a great source of amusement to me, and of deep interest to Helen, to watch the toilettes of the different ladies. With their dresses before breakfast to take the waters, their dresses after breakfast, their afternoon dresses, their dresses for dinner, and again their dresses for the mountain promenades, they seemed eternally adorning themselves, and never seemed to appear twice in the same dress. I never fully realised what the extravagance of the Second Empire meant till then. Even Helen, who, as Lady Trevennis, never wore the same dinner dress more than twice, and whose milliner's bills alone must have been as much as the income of a barrister in fair practice, said it 'was really too ridiculous.' No wonder that when these great Paris ladies took their departure for Biarritz their trunks were



about as large as a few cottages. As Helen looked out of the window at these fashionable dames (a few of whom she knew, but who either did not recognise her as the simple Mrs. Disney, or else cut her), I used often to notice an expression of regret pass over her face, as if she felt what an abyss separated them from her, and then she would come over to me when she saw that I divined her thoughts, and kiss me tenderly, and appear bright and smiling.

Considering the position that Helen had occupied in society, and the immense fortune she had always had at her disposal, nothing could be more perfect and graceful than the manner in which she suited herself to her altered circumstances. She was as simple in her dress, and as economical in her tastes, as if she were the wife of a country parson. I could never ascertain

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whether she was sincerely penitent for her past conduct, or whether it was merely regret that she had committed sins that *the world* would never pardon. I must own that I never saw her exhibit any indication of true repentance; for she seemed to believe in, or care for, nothing of a religious tendency. What she felt in her heart of hearts was of course to me a mystery; but if she had any thoughts of a solemn nature, she managed to conceal them so well that I never could discover any signs of their existence. Whenever my conversation drifted into graver and more serious channels, or I attempted 'to improve the occasion,' Helen always looked bored and apathetic; and once she said to me, 'Don't talk cant, darling; I have seen so much of it, that I don't want you also to be infected with it.' I therefore in future avoided all subjects of a 'serious' nature.

We remained at Eaux Bonnes till the commencement of September. I had now been married about six weeks, and each day that passed over my head deepened my affection, for the first and only woman that I had ever loved. Hardly a thought crossed my mind, but how to increase the happiness of my Helen. I felt now, for the first time in my life, what a mighty power was concentrated in that one word 'love.' I blotted from out my mind all associations connected with her past history, and resolved that no ungenerous suspicions should ever arise in my heart concerning her. I trusted her fully, confidently, and implicitly. Living entirely alone with her, and avoiding, like the plague, all society, at the end of the first month I read her character as plainly as its perusal was possible.

I saw her, in spite of her outward good

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humour and geniality, a woman cold and reserved at heart. There was an amount of secretiveness about her which made it very difficult for me to fathom the exact state of her feelings. To a certain depth, nothing could be easier than to fathom her; for she wore her heart on her sleeve, and took every opportunity of displaying ideas and thoughts she cared very little about; but below that depth I could never get. When I tried to explore those reserved regions, she gave me no encouragement to pursue my inquiry, but invariably turned the conversation. Outwardly, nothing could be more devoted than her affection for me; but after a few weeks, it seemed to me, at times, as if she were acting a part, and as if her expressions of love were forced, and not spontaneous. And then it appeared like treachery for me to harbour such an idea about the woman who, since




her union with me, had been all that the fondest husband could desire; and whenever such ideas arose in my mind, I resolutely tried to stamp them out.

I noticed too, with considerable pain, that there was an utter absence of rectitude about her; so long as she could gain her end, she was indifferent what means she adopted. She never looked at any question but from her own point of view, which was simply whether it suited her or no. If she liked it, she would permit my objections to overrule her wishes; but never allowed anything like principle or conscience to stand in their way. I also remarked that there was but little reliance to be placed on her word; for she constantly answered questions I put to her in the affirmative, which I knew should be replied to in the negative, or *vice versa*. But I hoped, that with guidance, and

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occasional advice diplomatically given by me, I could work wonders in reforming many of her moral defects. How many a man in my position has encouraged the same hopes!

One morning (I think it was on the 4th of September) I received a letter from my uncle, Canon Disney. He had taken no notice of me for years, but now, with the usual officiousness of relations, thought it incumbent upon him to write to me, and state how he regretted that I had been so totally lost to all sense of propriety as to marry such a 'notorious creature,' &c. The letter concluded with a quantity of the most eccentric advice; for, though a pluralist, my uncle was a singular man. I had intended tearing up the note, but Helen asked to see it, and indeed took it, before I could prevent her. After reading it, she came and sat on a stool at my feet,



and, clasping my knees with her hands, said very sadly :

‘Harry, you see what comes of marrying a woman who is a disgrace and not an honour to you!’

‘My pet, have I ever shown, by my conduct towards you, that I do *not* look on my marriage with you as a thing to be proud of? My darling, I never knew what happiness was till you became my wife!’

‘Ah, but, Harry, these days are too early for you to regret the step you have taken. How do I know that, sooner or later, you will not cease to love me?’

‘My own Helen, my love will exist for ever!’ I broke in passionately.

‘For ever,’ said she, smiling sadly, ‘is a long time; but how often has *for ever* simply meant love and happiness for a few brief weeks, and then satiety, neglect—perhaps hate!’

‘But, my own, why worry yourself about what will never happen?’

‘It *has* happened, Harry, to others; why not to you? You love me now because we have carefully shunned all society; and you have never yet seen the woman who bears your name, and who possesses your affection, slighted, shunned, and loathed, as those poor lepers we saw yesterday at Cauteret’s, who are not allowed to talk to or approach the pure and healthy. Harry, what am I but a social leper?’

‘Helen darling, cease talking like this. What care I for conventional maxims and worldly opinions? If the world looks coldly upon us, why, we will give it coldness in return; and if it shuns us, why, we will shun it in return. Society rather admires those who are entirely independent of it.’

‘Ah, Harry, no one is really independent of society, and least of all a woman. I

have forfeited what is of more value to a woman than all the world beside—the good opinion of my sex. Women are judged and condemned, not by what *men* think of them, but by what their own sex thinks of them. Sins like mine may be pardoned by men (as you, darling, have pardoned them), but they will never be forgiven by women.’

‘My own, let the dead past bury its dead. Is not my love sufficient for you? Do you still care so much about society?’ asked I, rather reproachfully.

‘Do I care for society?’ she answered sadly: ‘does the dethroned monarch care for his lost throne? does the exile care for his country? Ah, my Harry, I love society all the more now that I am cut off from it for ever!’

‘I had hoped otherwise,’ I replied equally sadly.

‘But, Harry, it is not merely society, in

the conventional acceptance of the word, that I mean. Who have I in the wide world but you? With the exception of my aunt, Lady Ann, not a woman would speak to me. And that is what I feel so bitterly, that henceforth between me and my sex there can be nothing in common. Believe me, Harry, a woman never knows what dishonour really means till her own sex begins to ignore her.'

'But, Helen, why all these sad forebodings apropos of this letter?'

'Because, Harry, I fear that when you have to enter the world, and return to towns in which you will have to live to pursue your art, and there see me unrecognised and avoided, you will begin to loathe me.'

'Helen, how can you talk like this! My poppet, this place has bored you, and you want change. I'll tell you what we'll

do—we'll go to Biarritz next week for the bathing.'

'O no, not to Biarritz!' pleaded she.

'Why not, Helen? I am sure a little sea bathing would do you an immense deal of good,' said I.

'O, but there will now be so many people one knows there, and I dread the idea of seeing them.'

'Nonsense, my dear Helen; and if we do meet those we know, what *does* it matter? I am tired of this sneaking away from everything, as if we were a guilty couple utterly ashamed of ourselves, for fear that we *may* come across those whom we know or who know us. I am *not* ashamed of myself nor of you; on the contrary, I am proud of you, and want all the world to see how proud of you I am, *carissima*;' and I drew her near to me, and kissed her pale face fondly. 'Let us defy this false world,

and show it that, strong in our mutual love, we can give back scorn for scorn and hate for hate, should it molest us. Courage, my darling; *ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*; and you will be far happier in your mind when you have once known the worst than living away in the strictest seclusion, and conjuring up all kinds of ideas that after all may only exist in your own imagination. Besides, you are now my wife, pet, and my name and my love will be your protection; and I do not choose that you should be made miserable simply because of Mrs. Grundy. Let us go about where we please; and instead of people cutting us, let us make the war offensive and not defensive, and cut them first.' And much more in the same strain.

Helen paused for a few moments; and then, with flashing eyes and her haughty head thrown back, she put her hand in mine,



and said, 'I will do as you wish, Harry, and, strong in your love and protection, will show the world, at least outwardly, that its taunts are powerless to wound me.'

The next week we were at Biarritz.

We put up at the Casino Hotel, and the first night dined at the *table-d'hôte*. The room was crowded; and as we entered to take our places, every eye was turned upon *la belle dame Anglaise*.

Helen, slightly pale, but with the most perfect self-possession, and with all her old London grace and haughty dignity, took my arm and ran the gauntlet of whispers, glances, and eye-glasses with the most disdainful composure till we had arrived at our places, which were at the extreme end of the room. Before the first *entrée* had been handed round, I could see by the faces of many of those at table that we were recognised.

As for the young dandies of the Paris Jockey Club, their eyes never were off Helen, so dazzled were they by her splendid beauty. I noticed a good many English at table, some of whom I had met in society. After dinner we entered the saloon to read the papers, and poor Helen had then need of all her courage not to show that she was susceptible of slights. The ladies moved away from her as if she had the plague, and one old English lady, as Helen approached the table to see *Charivari*, caught her carrotty daughter by the arm, and said :

‘Come, my dear, this is no place for us!’ with a savage glance at Helen, which she, however, never condescended to notice.

We sat together chatting and laughing, and paying not the slightest regard to the muttered remarks of those near us. Indeed Helen laughed so gaily and seemed so happy, that she might have been in her own

rooms at Double Zero House, instead of being an 'outcast' in the *salon de lecture* of an hotel. We walked into the adjoining room, where dancing was going on, and for the first time I valed with *my wife*. Helen was a most beautiful dancer, and as I was no bad performer, we attracted considerable attention.

As we rested on an ottoman at the end of the room, Frenchman after Frenchman, with the easy politeness of his nation, came up to me and begged to be introduced to madame, to solicit the permission of a valse; but Helen, with the sweetest smile, begged to be excused; and as they walked away rather discomfited, I heard them say:

*'Dieu de Dieu, qu'elle est belle !'*


After the dance we stepped out on to the balcony overlooking the Atlantic, now calm as love, and wooing the yellow sands with the gentlest of kisses. I lit a cigar,

and Helen, linking her arm within mine, said:

‘Well, darling, it is, I grant you, a formidable undertaking, but still I feel much happier that *le premier pas* has been taken.’

We amused ourselves for the first few days riding over to Bayonne, driving to St. Sebastian, and of course bathing. I need hardly say that at Biarritz men and women—or rather the other sex of man, I believe, is now the correct phrase—bathe together; and though it may shock our English prudery, it is conducted in a hundred times more decent a fashion than our own system of marine immersion; vide Scarborough, Margate, Hastings, Eastbourne, &c., in the season. As for Scotland, the ladies bathe off the sands in the garb of Eve before the fall; vide that gloomy and most detestable of watering-places, North Berwick.

Helen and I used to amuse ourselves



after our two hours' dip in sitting on the chairs on the sands, and watching the manœuvres of the bathers and their fantastic dresses. One day, whilst we were sitting as usual on the sands, enjoying the animated scene in front of us, I heard a voice, whose tones I knew too well, say close to Helen :

‘My dear Mrs. Disney, how do you do? What a most happy *rencontre*! How do you do, Mr. Disney?’ and Lord Edgeware came up to my wife, shook hands with her, and bowed to me smilingly, as if we were the best friends in the world.

‘Lord Edgeware!’ I heard Helen say, as if surprised.

‘Yes; I returned from the Mediterranean a few weeks ago, and passing through Spain, came on here from Madrid by the new line. O Emily, Grace!’ and his lordship turned round and addressed two young

ladies of about sixteen and seventeen, with whom he had been walking, 'let me introduce Mrs. Disney to you;' and a few seconds afterwards I was also introduced, and found myself standing up talking to these young ladies; whilst Lord Edgeware had quietly seated himself on my chair, and was chatting away to my wife, as if he were quite the friend of the family.

I must own that there was a clever piece of diplomacy in this move of Lord Edgeware's. By introducing these young ladies to Helen, who were his cousins, he showed that in his opinion she was not out of the pale of society; and I saw Helen's face brighten up, and look happier than I had seen it for many a day, as she shook hands warmly with the girls. Since her marriage with me they were the *first* ladies of position who had spoken to her; they were young girls who had just left school and had not

‘come out,’ so knew nothing of ‘Mr. Faynix’s notorious daughter.’ By introducing these girls to me I was left under the necessity of talking to them and of making myself agreeable, especially as Lord Edgeware was engrossing entirely the attention of Helen. I bowed most coldly to him, but was compelled to make some attempt at conversation with these young damsels, who were both very shy and very silly, and regarded life from only two points of view: one was, that everything they liked was ‘*such fun* ;’ and the other, that everything they disliked was ‘O, such a bore!’ However, I listened keenly to what his lordship was saying to Helen, for the green-eyed monster was gnawing at my heart.

‘Yes,’ I heard him say, ‘I am staying here till the end of the month ; at least not exactly here, but at Château Boissy, two or three miles from here. Who do you think

came last night? Dolly Chichester. You remember him when he was in the Fusiliers—a most popular fellow!

‘O yes, I remember him,’ said Helen; ‘a fair man with handsome features, who made a point of always agreeing with one smilingly, and would either praise or run down any one you might be talking about, according to the cue you gave him. He’s very popular, I know; but I never cared for popular men of that kind—they are the spaniels of society.’

‘How severe you are! Let me see whether I have any news to tell you about our friends. Really I am afraid there is at present a great dearth of scandal; which is always to be deplored, for scandal is the very salt of conversation.’

‘And the tomb of truth,’ broke in Helen.


‘O, truth! that has been buried a long while ago; we never see it nowadays. We



really ought, though, to love our neighbour more than we do,' said his lordship slowly and reflectively, 'considering what an immense source of interest and amusement he is to us. O, yes, I know what I was going to say: the Bishop of St. Ventre has married at last Miss Pryce, and, by the way, he has engaged your old *chef* De Bœuf. I should say before the honeymoon is over, he would of the two prefer his cook to his wife. I should, I know.'

'But then everybody knows that the seat of Lord Edgeware's affection is his palate, not his heart,' said Helen.

'That shows my taste,' laughed his lordship; and then I had to answer some stupid question which one of these young ladies thought it incumbent upon herself to ask me, to keep the conversational ball rolling. I forget what it was, but it was either, whether I liked Biarritz, or that she thought the grass was very green, or that it would



rain to-morrow, or something of that interesting nature, which effectually prevented my hearing any more what Lord Edgeware said for the present. At the end of about four minutes there was a pause in our conversation, and I heard his lordship say,

‘Have you heard of the death of poor Thirlwall?’

‘No! is he dead?’ exclaimed Helen with that expression of assumed pain which one puts on when hearing the death of somebody to whom we are utterly indifferent.

‘Yes; he was shot in a duel at Ostend last Wednesday — something about Mrs. Tremlett—affair of honour, you know.’

‘Affair of honour, indeed!’ said Helen sarcastically. ‘It is just like you men to make vice a virtue, by calling the worst things by the finest names.’

‘We do,’ said Edgeware dryly; ‘we call marriage a paradise, and woman an angel:

it is odd, isn't it?' added he rising; and after a few more words, and a promise to do himself the pleasure of calling, he bowed and took his departure along with his cousins.

We returned to our hotel for lunch almost immediately after this interruption; and as we walked along the sands I said:

'Helen, I wish to ask a favour of you.'

'I know what it is before you ask it,' she replied, showing for the first time since our marriage a touch of sullenness and temper.

'Well, darling, if you know it, I hope that you do not think it of such an extraordinary nature as to be angry at my asking it,' added I.

She played with her sunshade, and made no answer.

'*Carina*, you know how I dislike Lord Edgeware—you know what I think of his character, and how odious and detestable I

consider his conduct. When you were Lady Trevennis, you remember how—'

'O yes, you were always running him down, and painting him blacker than he really is,' exclaimed she pettishly.

'But, Helen my darling, is it out of place in me, your husband, to say that I disapprove of you continuing your friendship with Lord Edgeware? The attentions of such a man—and he does pay you attention—would compromise any woman, especially one in your present position. I must ask you, my own, to break off your intimacy with him, and when he calls to refuse to see him.'

'You wish to domineer over me, Harry!' said she, with flushing cheeks and flashing eyes. 'Heaven knows I have but few friends in the world now, and you wish to lessen the number of the few I have who are not ashamed of me.'

'Not so, Helen. You know—none better

—how gladly I will welcome any friends of yours; but I deny that Lord Edgeware is, or should be, a friend of yours. I know his sentiments about friendship and what he calls gallantry perfectly, and being aware of them, I object to his society.'

'But this is all pure jealousy on your part, Harry,' said she coldly.

'Yes, Helen, it is jealousy. A love like mine, so absorbing, so concentrative, can hardly be otherwise than jealous. I own it would make me most unhappy if I saw you now at all intimate with that man. He is a disgrace to the order he belongs to.'

'And yet this disgrace to his order has been the only man who has thought me fit to be introduced to those of my sex who are his relations. It was a kind and delicate act to one (I use your own words) in my "present position."'

'By those words, Helen, I meant that,

as Lady Trevennis, you were under the ægis of an illustrious name and a brilliant social position, and that you could do many things with impunity which it would be most unwise for you to commit as Mrs. Disney, the wife of a simple artist. How glad people will be to paint you blacker (I use your own words) than you are, now that all the past is made known! And I know no easier way for them to arrive at that result than by seeing you on friendly terms with Lord Edgeware. You cannot touch pitch and not be defiled.'

We had now arrived at the hotel, and this conversation, which was inexpressibly painful to me, was broken off for a time. I thought it advisable not to resume it till Helen was in a better frame of mind. She was very silent and *distracte*, and seemed as if she were in close argument with herself, and could arrive at no exact conclusion.

In the afternoon we went on to the parade, and as we passed the young ladies with whom I had talked in the morning they coloured deeply, and turned away their heads without recognising us ; while the lady they were with glared at us as savagely as if she were an injured shareholder, and we the insolvent directors. It was evident that these young damsels had been enlightened about Mrs. Disney.

The 'cut' was not lost upon Helen, who turned very pale, but still maintained with Spartan fortitude her calm haughty air of self-possession. We talked to each other during our walk, not in the same affectionate manner as we had hitherto done, but in that constrained cold sort of tone in which people converse who talk upon every subject but the one which is the most important. Helen did not come down

to *table-d'hôte* that evening, but complained of a headache.

How bitterly I hated Lord Edgware, whose presence had come between us, estranging my wife from me for the first time, and icing my heart towards her I loved ! But Helen's obstinacy only showed me she was far from indifferent to Lord Edgware. How I tortured my mind by making mountains out of molehills, by pondering over everything Helen had said about him from the first time I had known her ! Ah, what pain keener than the *first* pangs of jealousy !

On going up to my studio after dinner, what was my surprise to find Helen sitting reading. She came up to me, threw her arms round my neck, and begged me to pardon her for her petulant and wayward behaviour during the day. She had been not well, not herself ; but she really, really wished to please me, and to make me a happy



husband. She would never see Lord Edgeware again, and would leave me to tell him, should I ever see him, that it was her express wish that he should drop his acquaintance with her. But would I mind leaving Biarritz as soon as possible, and going somewhere else—to Arcachon, Trouville, or anywhere? It would be so awkward for her to meet him. I promised to do what she wished, and felt only too glad that we were again perfectly reconciled to each other, to try to persuade her to remain anywhere where she would not be at her ease.

Lord Edgeware called the next day just as we were going out for our afternoon promenade. Helen remained in her room, and, no doubt much to his lordship's disappointment, he had a *tête-à-tête* with me instead of with my wife.

I told him frankly, and without any beating about the bush, that I begged

he would cease all acquaintanceship with Mrs. Disney, and that it was her wish that he should do so. I also said, that, considering the scenes that had passed between him and me, it was most desirable that we should never meet again. His lordship, without being a bit taken aback, replied, that, as a man of the world, he quite understood my sentiments; but that as Mrs. Disney had been an old friend of his as Lady Trevennis, he had wished to continue his friendship with her; but that of course, as I objected, and more especially as Mrs. Disney herself had expressed a wish that all intimacy should be at an end between them, he had not another word to say. He apologised to me for his intrusion, and bowing most politely, withdrew.

Two days afterwards we went to Arca-  
chon, passing the time most happily till the  
end of October, when we started for Paris.




## CHAPTER V.

### DECEIVED NO LONGER.

'Adieu, love! adieu, love! untrue love,  
Untrue love, untrue love! adieu, love!'

'For think not though thou wouldst not love thy lord,  
Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee:  
I am not made of so slight elements.  
My love, through flesh, hath wrought into my life  
So far, that my doom is I love thee still:  
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.'

E had decided on living near Paris, as I hoped to find among the French a ready market for my wares. I placed the two pictures I had been engaged on since July in the Paris winter exhibition of oil- and water-colours, and before the end of the month of November they were sold. One was the 'Pyrenean Peasant,' and the other

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‘Les Baigneuses,’ two girls, in the most *chic* and fantastic of bathing-dresses, about to take a header out of a boat. Both French and English dealers finding that I intended to make France my home for some time to come, gave me several very handsome commissions to execute, which would take about two years for me to complete, and for which I was offered a sum of nearly 5000*l*.

Finding that fortune was now smiling upon me, I resolved to live accordingly. I rented a beautiful little villa near Passy, standing in its own grounds, and kept a small phaeton with a pair of ponies for Helen, and a brougham and mail-paeton for myself. Nothing could be in better taste and more comfortable than my establishment. All we now wanted was a little agreeable society. But that neither money nor talent could obtain.

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The doors of the *salons* of Paris were as firmly closed against Helen as the drawing-rooms of London. Society both English and French refused to hold out the hand of welcome, or evince any signs of recognition to one who had so outraged their law of morals. Helen bore up against all this coldness and contempt most bravely; but I could see that the iron was entering her soul. There was a bitterness and malignity in the tone in which she spoke of those of her own sex, which I had never before noticed. Whether we went to concert, opera, theatre, or drove in the Bois, Helen commented most savagely on most of the gay leaders of Paris *ton*, whom she saw surrounded and fêted as she herself had been when Lady Trevennis. She pointed out many of these ladies to me; and were I to credit her statements respecting them, it would have been as difficult to

find fifty good women in Paris as it was fifty righteous in Sodom of old. Nor were her strictures confined to the fair Parisiennes only. According to her, the state of London society was no better than that of Paris, though she owned it was infinitely more cautious in the means it adopted to preserve its misconduct from the public eye. She mentioned to me many fashionable dames by name, whose lives were just as false and incorrect as those of their sisters in Paris or St. Petersburg.

‘But what can you expect,’ she said, ‘from a state of society in which the young men refuse to marry, and where out of ten marriages nine are simply *mariages de convenance*?’

I, however, paid little attention to her bitter remarks, for all of them reminded me very forcibly of the fable of the fox without his tail. The gist of all her sarcasms

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always amounted to this: in London nearly all are false who have beauty and opportunity. Whether her statements were deep truths, the result of her own experience of the world, or scurrilous libels on those from whom she was now excluded, I must leave others to determine. From the few cases that come into our Divorce Court, the healthy tone of English literature, and the excellent example set to the lower millions by the upper ten thousand in all matters connected with dress, religion, and behaviour, I should conclude that Helen's remarks were cruel libels on a most virtuous community. Recent events certainly bear me out in saying this.

The purchaser of the two pictures I exhibited in the winter exhibition turned out, fortunately for me, to be the Minister of the Beaux Arts. I had scarcely been in Paris three months, before I received the


offer to paint one of a series of small frescoes which were about to adorn the Louvre. I valued the compliment so highly, that I at once put off several of the commissions on which I was engaged, and accepted the proposal. The subject I chose was Ulysses sailing past the Island of the Sirens. It offered me an opportunity of displaying my talent in flesh-colouring, and of Lely-like poses of the female figure. The consequence of my undertaking this commission was, that I had to leave Helen for about four hours every day, and paint at the Louvre. She, however, made no objection to this, and it almost seemed to my sensitive nature that she was rather glad than otherwise of my absence.

Have you ever stood on the beach and watched the ebbing of the spring-tide? At first, by the appearance of the waters, it is impossible for you to tell whether the



waves are advancing or receding, and it is only by observing the succession of wet kisses left on the rippled sands that you are aware that the tide is going down. But after the tide has run out a certain distance, the movement of the waters plainly shows that the waves are in rapid retreat, and that all doubt is at an end whether the tide is ebbing or flowing. And so it was with Helen's love for me. Regarding her affection towards me during the early part of our residence in Paris, it was impossible to say at first whether she was liking me more or less as each day rolled over our heads. It was only when I compared her love for me then with the love she had evinced towards me during our Pyrenean honeymoon, that I became convinced that she was gradually liking me less. The tide of her love was ebbing.

After we had been living at Paris for




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some three months, it was most painfully evident to me that she no longer felt the same affection for me as formerly. There was an air of indifference in her behaviour towards me, a forced sort of sympathy with everything connected with me, which was even more disagreeable to me than positive coldness would have been. The heart is a most sensitive barometer, and it required not the quick eyes of love to see I was no longer all in all to my wife. The contrast each day becoming more perceptible between the past and the present caused me the bitterest misery and anxiety. I tried at first to attribute her difference of behaviour not to any want of affection for me, but to her disappointment at not being received by several Parisian ladies whom she had known in the days of her prosperity, and the prospect of whose society had been our chief inducement to settle in

Paris. But when I asked her if she would like to quit Paris for some other city, she said languidly that she was as happy there as she would be anywhere else. So I had no alternative but to resign myself to the melancholy reflection, that my love was simply not reciprocated.

I never reproached Helen with the change in her affection for me—there is something so wounding to one's *amour propre* in telling a woman that she does not love you. And besides, what advantage is gained? If the woman is a candid creature, she will in all probability dislike you all the more for your being fully aware of her feelings towards you; or she will, if she is a hypocrite (and what woman is not?), assume an affection that she does not feel, and, what is worse, that you know perfectly well she does not feel. No; I bore my sorrow calmly and silently, and I believe that Helen was



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perfectly unconscious that I had detected any difference in her behaviour towards me. I did all in my power to let her feel her solitude as little as possible, and took her constantly to theatres, operas, &c. She always preferred dining out at some restaurant, as she thought it more lively than dining at home ; and I constantly gratified her wish in this respect, and then took a turn afterwards in the Champs Elysées to hear the singing.

One day we were dining at the Rocher, and it so happened that the salon which we generally patronised was so full that we had to go into a private room, the wall of which was undergoing repair, and partly pulled down. A thick curtain, however, hid all defects, and prevented us seeing into the room adjoining. It did not prevent us, though, from hearing what was said in the next room ; and when I found out from

the waiter that they were four young Englishmen of fashion dining together, I regretted that I had not been more circumspect in asking for another apartment. I, however, coughed very loud, and spoke to Helen with a very sonorous voice, in order that the fear of being overheard might induce these gentlemen to keep their conversation within bounds. But when I heard champagne-corks popping one after the other, I own I felt that soon the time would arrive for 'I say, I heard such a good story!' and I trembled accordingly. Helen amused herself by listening to what they said, which did not tend much to remove my fears. At last I heard this: 'When's Edgeware's hotel in St. Honoré going to be finished?'

'It's nearly ready now, and it'll be a doosid ugly thing when it's done—it's a precious deal too low and too broad.'

‘Gad! he must have taken his morals and his conversation as the proper models for architecture, then!’

‘Ha! ha!’

‘I wonder he doesn’t marry and settle down, and go in for being a respectable pillar of the State, and all that kind of thing!’

‘Well, if the State is going to be supported by such pillars, the sooner some Samson, in the shape of the Radical element, comes and pulls them down, the better for every one! The Lords must go soon, that’s one comfort!’

‘O, what an infernal Radical you are, De Bohun! I wonder any county returns you! I believe you look upon the British Constitution as if it were about as done-up as your own!’

‘Yes, I’m a true Radical! Nothing like going in for progress and advancement,’ replied De Bohun.

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‘Whose progress and advancement?’

‘My own!’

‘Ha! ha!’


‘Well, I suppose we shall hear that Edgeware is going to be married some day.’

‘Odd girl who *would* marry him, I should say!’ exclaimed De Bohun.

‘Odd girl who *wouldn’t* marry him, with his title and fortune!’ said the first speaker.

‘Besides, girls nowadays have no choice in the matter; the mother makes the match, and the daughter takes the man. Modern marriage means maternal coercion. I should like to see a well-bred girl refuse Edgeware if he proposed!—wouldn’t her mother, as the Yankees say, “call Cain and let out things,” if she did!’

‘I don’t think your wish will ever be realised. Edgeware isn’t a marrying man, and I know what brings him to Paris just now.’



‘What is it? Tell us—do!’

‘No, no!—solemn secret between him and me. I’ve only told five other fellows; but they are all safe men.’

‘So are we—all of us—safe as a bank!’ cried the young men all together.

‘Exactly—as a bank at the present day. No; I must decline to accept that comparison as a sufficient guarantee.’

And then their voices were hushed, and we heard no more for the present.

‘Helen, were you aware that Lord Edge-ware was in Paris?’ asked I.

She replied in the negative, and seemed surprised that I alluded to a man whom we had both decided upon never mentioning.

The young men in the next room were at their dessert; and when I heard their modest orders for magnums, I thought that it would be more prudent to finish dinner rapidly, and quit the dangerous contiguity



of their society. Helen and I could hear them talking quite plainly.

‘Transmarine have fallen four, I see, by this day’s post,’ said one.

‘I told my broker to buy Diddles when they had fallen to seventy-two,’ said another.

‘I am thinking of selling Congo Arrears when they get to par,’ said a third.

And then they all with one accord raised their voices, and nothing was heard but what was a good thing to buy and a good thing to sell; till one might reasonably have taken these four young men for stock-brokers instead of, as they were, men of fashion.

‘How very English!’ thought I, as I listened to their conversation; but I feared their society no longer. When youth worships Plutus, he is no very ardent votary of Venus.

A few days after this dinner, as I was

returning home a little earlier than usual, I saw Lord Edgeware driving over the Pont de Jena in his well-appointed, light-looking Stanhope, drawn by the powerful high-stepping gray which I knew so well in London. He did not recognise me; but as he passed quickly by the footpath on which I was walking, I could see a smile of extreme self-content overspreading his face.

On entering the drawing-room, I found Helen at her Davenport writing a letter. She seemed for a moment surprised at my entrance, and quickly folded up the letter; but rapidly conquering herself, she came and kissed me smilingly.

‘You have returned earlier, Harry, than usual,’ said she, resting her head on my shoulder with something like her old affection, as I put my arm round her waist.

‘Yes, pet;—glad to see me, eh?’ And

I bent down and kissed the fair face, with its wonderful eyes looking at me, O so reproachfully! for having asked the question.

‘Whom is that letter for, Helen?’

She put it in my hand, and its envelope, still open, was addressed to Mons. Lablache, Rue Neuve des Petits Champs.

‘O, it is a letter to Lablache, the music-seller, asking him to send me some music. You can read it, if you like,’ added she.

‘My darling,’ replied I, returning the letter, ‘I have no wish to examine your correspondence, and least of all one of such a very interesting nature,’ added I, laughing.

‘I daresay, Harry,’ said Helen, taking the letter, ‘that I may have to ask you to take a letter for me once or perhaps twice a week to him, about any new music that I may want. You don’t mind my troubling you, darling? for you know that

during your absence music is my only solace.'

'When have you asked me to do anything you wanted that I refused?' replied I gaily. 'Come, give me some music whilst I take a cup of tea.' And I led her to the piano, and sipped my tea whilst she played to me.

A month after this conversation I was returning to my villa in the gayest of spirits. Six months' hard work had made me finish my fresco, and I had just given it that very afternoon my last concluding touches. We were now in the month of June, and Paris was getting hot; and at every turn one met that lively class of our species, the British tourist. Heat and the summer influx of the not very favourable specimens of our nation who flaunt the streets of the 'Queen of Cities,' dressed as if they were going down a coal-pit or on a shooting

expedition, are both about equally unendurable in Paris; and I had resolved that very afternoon to propose to Helen that we should go on a tour to Sweden. For the last three weeks Helen had been singularly kind and affectionate to me, and during that time I felt happier than I had done for many a day. I entered my villa as gay as prosperity and love can make a man.

‘Helen!’ I cried, as I went into my studio. I received no answer. She was not in her boudoir, the drawing-room, or the dining-room. I rang the bell.

‘Is your mistress upstairs?’

‘Madame has gone out.’

‘Driving?’ asked I.

‘No, sir. Madame left this morning at eleven. We have been expecting her return every instant. Will Monsieur take lunch? It is still on the table.’

I replied in the negative, and the ser-

vant quitted the room. I thought nothing of Helen's absence, as it was now only three o'clock in the afternoon, and she might have been detained shopping.

'Perhaps she is lying down in her room. I'll go and see,' said I.

I entered our bedroom, but saw no signs of Helen. I passed into my dressing-room, and on my toilet-table was a long envelope, addressed to me in Helen's handwriting. I opened it, and read the document it contained.

I have the letter by my side whilst I am writing this ; the ink faded by time, the paper crumpled and thumbbed by constant perusal. How often have I read and re-read its contents ! It was an awful letter ! A letter which drives a husband either to a madhouse, or goads him on to murder through the bloodthirsty lust for revenge. A letter which turns love into hate, youth

into age, and makes the future a blank and the past a hell.

As I read it, and my dull stupefied brain began to comprehend its contents, I felt the blood in my veins icing, and my heart throbbing as if it would burst its prison-walls. A strange sort of sickness came over me; and as I laid the fatal letter down, and looked at my reflection in the glass, I could scarcely believe that yon face, livid as discoloured ivory, with its bloodshot eyes circled by the halo of incipient fever, and its hollow cheeks, was my own. My own, that in the freshness of health and the radiancy of happiness had but a few hours ago, on this very spot, pressed with my daily farewell kiss the upturned face of her who was now no longer my wife, but a woman shameless beyond redemption! Yes, it was at last true all that I had heard about her; everything which the obstinacy of my arrogant nature and the

blindness of my inordinate love had refused, in spite of my better sense, ever to believe, was perfectly true. Her accusers were right; I alone, her defender, was in the wrong. She was a bad wicked woman, and in the letter before me she owned the fact.

I decline to make her letter public, even to you; but I will furnish you with all the particulars that are necessary to be known. The letter began :

‘ Harry,—By the time you read this, I shall be far away from you—away from you for ever. Did I think that I should meet you again face to face, I could not write to you as I am now doing. But the hope that the act I am about to commit—the grossest insult that wife can pass upon her husband—will sever us for ever, and the thought that I shall never again see your face or hear your bitter reproaches,



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nerve me to make this confession, which I feel is due to you. Your kindness and devotion to me have deserved a better return than the shame my conduct must bring on you. I make no excuse for myself; I know to the full the consequences of the wickedness I am now calmly premeditating, and yet I cannot resist the fate that hurries me on to the brink of the abyss down which I must inevitably fall. I had wished otherwise; but fate has been too strong for me, and I succumb, and own myself vanquished.

‘Harry, I never loved you! When, ruined and disgraced, I married you, in the hopes that a brighter future might be in store for me, I knew how fondly you were attached to me; and when I thought of you in connection with the past, how devoted you were to my interests, how gallantly you stood by my side in my bitter hour of trial,

it softened my heart, already very kindly inclined towards you, and I said to myself: "I will try to love this man, for he is worthy of being loved, and as his wife I will seek to make amends for the past." Weakened by my illness and with my nerves unstrung, I felt then very keenly the pangs of conscience. I married you with the stern resolve to be an affectionate wife, and never to be allured again by the false glitter of the world. In my heart of hearts I resolved to be a good woman; but I kept all such feelings locked up within my heart, and you do not know what severe struggles I have had with myself to maintain my resolution.

Gradually, as day after day the old leaven of the world began to work within me, I found that my union with you was becoming insupportable. It was too quiet, too dull for my nature, which had

been ever since I left school so fed upon excitement, that I now craved after it like a drunkard after his dram. I did all in my power to crush these feelings when they arose within me; but every day they became stronger, whilst my resistance became weaker. I was also disappointed in the results of my marriage with you; for I had hoped — not that society would again receive me, but that *friends* would pardon the past and visit me. But you know it has not been so, and you can have no idea how insupportable has been the solitude I have had to endure.

‘And then the thought came into my mind, if I am to be shunned and avoided by all, at least let it be in the society of one I love. I can never blot out the past; in the eyes of the world I shall always be a plague-stricken creature; let me then simply consult my own feelings and act as my wishes

dictate. Harry, I have tried to the utmost to love you ; I have tried with all my might to make duty take the place of love, gratitude the place of affection ; but in vain. For another had long usurped all power over my heart, and that other is the man about whom you have always warned me, and against whom your dislike—nay, hate—has always been directed—Lord Edgeware.’

The letter then went on to say that Helen, when Lady Trevennis, some few years ago, had met Lord Edgeware in society, shortly after he had succeeded to the title. He was then in the height of his popularity, and was looked on as the great arbiter of fashion among men. Between him and Lady Trevennis an intimacy sprang up which continued for some time. Respecting the nature of that intimacy the letter was silent ; let us, then, in charity give the writer the benefit of the doubt,

and conclude that it was but a Platonic *liaison*. It, however, was so strongly disapproved of by Sir John Trevennis, that the Admiral reëntered his profession, after finding that all his remonstrances with his wife on the subject of her friendship for Lord Edgeware were in vain. This must have been the time alluded to by Newton, when he said that they were not separated, but lived apart. Two years before Helen's marriage with me, she had gone to winter at Hyères, accompanied by Lady Ann and a Dr. Rainsfort, her physician, for her left lung had always been delicate. It so happened that Lord Edgeware was staying at Cannes at the same time, and a correspondence for the first time ensued between them.

‘I must own,’ continued the letter, ‘that from the first I was much attached to Lord Edgeware; and had I been a free woman, there is no man I should have pre-


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ferred to marry. You know him only by his reputation among men; but you can entertain no idea of his power over those of my sex with whom he wishes to ingratiate himself. I feared him whilst I loved him, and I fear him now; but I am as powerless to resist him as the needle is to resist the magnet. In my letters to him I made no secret of my sentiments towards him; and his replies only encouraged me to repeat those sentiments with greater frankness and intensity of feeling. To correspond with him was, I own, not only wrong, but also most foolish and dangerous. After my return to England, Lord Edgeware visited for a year the United States and the Brazils. Occasionally we corresponded, but now only very rarely, as I very much regretted my imprudence in having so compromised myself with him by the tone of my former letters. When I did write to

him again, I carefully avoided anything beyond the most general topics.'

Helen next met Lord Edgeware when she was staying in Paris at the Duchesse de D——'s. This was just before her return to Coombe Royal and my first meeting with her. It appeared that the Duchesse de D—— was a great beauty, and Lord Edgeware openly showed his preference for her, to the neglect of Lady Trevennis. Helen's *amour propre* (always very strong) was so keenly wounded, that she quitted Lord Edgeware in something like a passion, and the Duchess in a decided huff.

'I returned to Coombe Royal,' she wrote, 'and there, in the midst of a peaceful smiling country, I resolved for the hundredth time to renounce for ever Lord Edgeware, and to ask Sir John to return home. I was then desirous, as you know, of becoming a prominent leader of London fashion,



and I knew that Sir John's presence would have a most desirable effect in furthering my views. I now come to the interview, part of which you said you overheard, between me and Lord Edgware in the grounds at Coombe Royal.'

The writer then very fully stated the object of Lord Edgware's visit to her, which was not only to renew his protestations of friendship, but to state how passionately he loved her, and to implore her to elope with him. Helen refused to listen to him, and indignantly desired that all intimacy between them should cease at once and for ever. Finding that her resolution in this respect remained unalterable, he attempted to succeed by coercion where he had failed by entreaty. He threatened to show the letters she had written to him to several of her friends, and thus make a public scandal of her name, should she not relent within a



fortnight. 'It was then, Harry, that you appeared on the scene, and saved me from insult by obtaining possession of my letters. You remember what I said was the nature of their contents? It was false. Those letters spoke of love as a woman should only when she addresses her husband.'

The letter then went on to say how Helen had placed implicit trust in me from the first; and finding that I was a man utterly inexperienced in matters of the world, and, notwithstanding my cynicism, extremely innocent and malleable, she determined to encourage me, as perhaps I might prove useful to her. I have told you how she encouraged me by pretending to be fond of me, and how she made use of me, and how blinded I was to her wiles. In short, she looked upon me and treated me as a fool.

As Lord Edgeware was then living

much in Paris, Helen did not meet him again till the night I met them in most friendly conversation together at — Embassy. Lord Edgware had fully apologised for his gross impertinence to her, and stated frankly that his mind must have been affected by his having for the last two years so freely indulged in absinthe, to have passed such an insult upon her as to hint even at the idea of elopement. His lordship now said that he had become quite a reformed character, and hoped that Lady Trevennis would forgive the past, and become as great a friend as ever. His prayer was granted; 'for his reappearance and apparent penitence awoke all my dormant passion for him.'

Shortly after the Trevennis *exposé*, Lord Edgware went on a yachting expedition to the East; but hearing of Helen's recovery he again returned to England. And

it was during the time that I was paying my attentions to her at Tunbridge Wells that she had written to Lord Edgeware, asking him to marry her. His lordship, in reply, protested how deeply he loved her, how pained he had been to hear of her illness, how rejoiced he was to hear of her recovery, and how he had never ceased to think of her, &c. ; in short, he made her every promise but the one she required. It was only when she had ascertained that Lord Edgeware had no intention of complying with her wish, that she arrived at the conclusion that she would marry me.

‘Harry, poor boy! during the early days of our honeymoon at Luchon and Eaux Bonnes, how earnestly I struggled to reciprocate the deep tenderness and affection you lavished on me! I tried to love you as you deserved, and to reward your attachment to me as if I were a true wife,

whose whole existence was bound up in her husband's. I believe I succeeded in making you imagine that you were all in all to me; for, Harry—it may wound your vanity—you are not difficult to deceive. Believe me or not, as you will, but solemnly I assure you, no other intention at that time ever entered my head but to do strictly my duty to you, no matter at what cost. I liked you—I always have and will like you—and my sense of gratitude, which at that time was very keen, on account of your disinterested affection towards me, aided me in tinging with a warmer colour the feelings of friendship that I have always had towards you. But those feelings were no more love than the reflection of the sun on an iceberg is heat.' \* \* \*

‘And then Lord Edgware came to Biarritz; for he heard I was there. I forget what our conversation was about; but


I well remember how delighted I was to see him again. I felt that if he were only near me, the dull monotony of my life would be bearable. I know that I compared him, the man I loved from my heart, with you whom I loved but from duty, and that you were weighed in the scale and found wanting. And then you bade me cease my intimacy with him, and excited the worst feelings of my nature against you; and I lost my temper, and the mask dropped for a moment from my face, and I became sulky and sullen towards you. You know not the bitter struggle it cost me to obey your wishes, and to tell Lord Edgware that henceforth I desired that he and I should be strangers. But my resolution to be a good woman and an obedient wife towards you at last conquered; and in order to flee from temptation, I desired that we should quit Biarritz. But flight was

in vain ; for Lord Edgeware has frequently met me and written to me unknown to you, from the very first moment of our arrival at Paris.

‘Let me now hasten on to the last act in the drama of my marriage with you. We remained a year at Paris. A year ! it seems a century. Ah, you do not know the bitter reflections I indulged in during the long hours that I was left alone ! How I hated everything—my sex, society, everybody ! I feared at times, when I thought of my life and the wearisome future that opened before me, that I should go mad again. What had I to live for ? You ? I was tired of you, and failed to appreciate your attachment to me. Society ? Its doors were as firmly shut against me as if I were the very lowest of my sex. Money ? What is wealth, however great, when it cannot be spent in gaiety or ostentation ? and for

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that you must have friends. I had none. I drove out alone; I spent my days alone, except occasionally meeting Lord Edgware when he was in Paris. I went to the opera with you, and I was still alone; for all who had known me in London steadily refused to recognise me. I was childless. I did not care for religion. I disliked reading. When I visited the poor the curé snubbed me, and the poor themselves knew my history, and treated me either with coolness or disrespect. My neighbours carefully avoided me. I have been a year in Paris, and not a woman in my class of life (perhaps I should say my *former* class of life) has spoken to me. I have drunk the cup of bitterness to the very dregs. So that it matters not how low I sink in the social scale; for whatever I do, my punishment cannot be greater than I have had to endure. By the time you have



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read this, I shall have descended to the level of the most unsexed of my sex ; for I shall no longer be a wife, but a mistress.'

The letter then stated the following particulars :

Three months ago Lord Edgeware had returned to Paris, in order to reside there for the season. He had fixed upon Paris, in order to be near Helen, who was living at Passy. The very day I met him, he was returning from a visit that he had just been paying her. He was constantly at my villa during my absence, and frequently met Helen in the Bois de Boulogne in the morning. A sustained correspondence was also carried on between them, and I (was ever insult so added to injury!) was their postman. The letters that I took to Lablache (a paid agent of Lord Edgeware), thinking they were orders for new music, were love-letters, as passionate as those that



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Mary addressed to Bothwell, or Héloïse to Abelard; and in the music that I took back to my wife were Lord Edgeware's replies! The very letter that I had caught her writing was one of these; but such confidence had she in my unsuspecting character, that she knew she could safely offer to place it in my hands without any fear of consequences.

‘The letter you took yesterday, Harry, contained these few words: “I consent. I shall be to-morrow at the Place Vendôme, at twelve.—HELEN.” Those few words simply signify, that by the time you read this I shall be hundreds of miles away from you, and—the mistress of Lord Edgeware.

‘And now one word in conclusion. Pursuit after us will be useless, for we have taken every precautionary means to travel without being recognised. And even should you succeed eventually in discovering us,

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what good would it do you? Gratify your revenge? But am I worth it? Ought not my conduct towards you — so infamously bad, so heartlessly base—rather to tend to make you rejoice that you are now free from such a shameless woman? Would you fight a duel with Lord Edgeware on my account? Well, the probability is that you would fall; but suppose you killed him. *Après?* You would perhaps gratify a natural feeling of revenge; but Lord Edgeware's death could never make us man and wife again. Would you wish to kill poor me? I hope not. No, Harry Disney; your course is clear before you — dissolve our marriage, and loathe me, hate me as you please, but do not attempt to pursue us—for such pursuit would be in vain. I know Lord Edgeware's character better than you do. I know him to be cold, calculating, and most base. I know that in linking my

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future with him I am courting all that should repel me. And yet, in the face of all this knowledge, I quit you for him. Why? Because I love him as I have never loved before. Oil and water can never mingle; the union of good and bad (I am the latter, you the former) has been wearisome to me. What will be the result of the union of bad with bad? Time soon will show, for I am about to try it. Adieu!—HELEN.'

I laid the letter down on my table, and stood for some little time as if petrified. Then I felt the hot blood coursing swiftly through my veins, a strange dizziness came over me, and I remember no more till I found myself in bed in a darkened room, and two doctors by my side.



## CHAPTER VI.

### AT NICE.

'Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes ;  
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere.

• • • • •

And all is past, the sin is sinn'd ; and I,  
Lo, I forgive thee, as eternal God  
Forgives !'

**F**OR the next two months I was very seriously ill with brain-fever. At first, the doctors who attended on me despaired of my life ; but thanks to my vigorous constitution I rallied, after having been perfectly unconscious for about eight weeks, and so rapidly improved in health, that a fortnight after my having regained my senses I was able to be wheeled

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about my garden in an invalid chair. I was now pronounced quite out of danger, and was told by my medical advisers that if I could 'only keep my mind quiet,' I should soon recover.

Only keep my mind quiet! What easy advice to give, but how impossible for a man with any feeling placed in my unhappy position to follow! As well tell the Indian Ocean, lashed into maddened waves by the fierce cyclone, to be calm, as to have bid me then 'keep my mind quiet.' No sooner had I so far recovered consciousness as to be aware of the past than the hot blood surged in my fevered veins like molten lead, and my heart I thought would have burst under its load of misery, rage, and wounded vanity.

Weak and doubly sensitive after my illness, the blow of Helen's desertion fell upon me with treble force. That she might soon



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if the burden that lay upon me was indeed greater than I could bear.

Everything reminded me of her absence, and at every turn my loss was made most painfully apparent. There was a solitude in the house to which I was unaccustomed. I missed the music of her harp and her piano, her sweet ringing voice, the innumerable *petits soins* which are the chief attractions in domestic life, and most keenly I felt that sense of loneliness and painful depression which invariably follows the sudden absence of some beloved one.

When I was wheeled about in my garden, I could with difficulty restrain my sobs from breaking forth as I passed spot after spot which reminded me of some association connected with my guilty wife. Here was the rustic seat by the fountain, on which she petted her pugs, and sat working whilst pretending to be enthusiastic over Lamar-

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tine or De Musset, which I read aloud to her. There was her flower-garden, from which she would cull bouquets for my studio. Here was the serpentine gravel-path on which we walked together before breakfast, and viewed Paris spread out like a map before us. Every tree, every shrub, every garden-walk, brought back to my mind some reminiscence connected with her. I could think of nothing else but the past, the bitter present, and the solitary future. I was becoming day by day more than morbid—I was monomaniacal on the subject of my grief.

And yet never a bitter thought crossed my mind as regards Helen. Had she suddenly appeared before me and craved my forgiveness, I would have folded her once more to my breast, and freely pardoned the grievous wrong she had inflicted upon me. I could not condemn her, nor judge her as



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her conduct deserved. It would have been better for me, perhaps, had I done so from the first; but my affection for her was so blind, so illogically deep, that it seemed to render me invulnerable to all feelings of pride or self-respect where Helen was concerned. I cannot account for the fact—I simply state that such was the case. It is, I own, a most debased and undignified avowal on my part to make, and one that shows an entire want of proper self-love; but still such were my feelings then towards her. I repeat, I would gladly have taken her back again, and fully and freely have forgiven her, had she desired it. And yet love had not blinded me to her terrible sins. I did not attempt to palliate them, I did not gloss them over, I saw them all with the most microscopic clearness; and yet, notwithstanding, I still passionately loved her. Strange, and awful, was it not?

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But her paramour! Sternly I vowed that if he and I ever met in this world, that meeting would be the last for one of us. Was his selfish gratification to be obtained unpunished at the expense of my agony of mind and my dishonour? Not so. For the man who separates wife from husband there is but one fate in store—death at the hands of the injured husband! I made no attempt to consider the more than ordinary temptations in which he was placed, since it was my wife who most ensnaringly had encouraged him; for I hated him with a hate that was only equalled by my love for Helen; and the more I thought she was to blame, the more I visited that blame on her detested lover. It was to be war to the knife between us—a duel *à outrance*.

With this resolution sternly implanted in my breast, I started, as soon as I was

able to travel, on the track of the guilty couple. I visited Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, Austria, and engaged the assistance of detectives in almost every town in Europe: but all in vain. I could obtain no tidings of the objects of my search. Numerous were the reports that I had to receive; but when they were carefully investigated, they led to nothing. Some said that Lord Edgeware's yacht had foundered in the Mediterranean; others that he had gone to the United States, and been wrecked off Newfoundland. No one knew anything of his whereabouts; but all knew that he had eloped with 'Lady Trevennis that was,' and was travelling on the Continent.

Helen's desertion of me of course caused some little sensation in the gossiping world. The newspapers noticed the matter, and the *Figaro* and the *Gaulois* made little bon-

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*mots* and some cynical remarks upon *les femmes*. The English papers followed in the footsteps of their continental contemporaries, and worked up the latest intelligence about the 'notorious daughter of Mr. Faynix' in the spiciest and most savoury form. The *Mixobarbarus* wrote a leading article upon Helen's elopement, plentifully garnished with such fine words, sentimental pathos, and highly appropriate moral remarks that they must have made tears roll down the dirty cheeks of its numerous readers. I received a sad letter from Lady Ann, in which she stated that they all felt most keenly the renewed disgrace this additional conduct of Helen's had brought upon them; but that their only consolation in their bitter hour of trial was, that she could not be 'in her right mind to act as she had done.' She concluded with some very sympathising remarks, which had the result such remarks

generally produce, and signed herself 'yours affectionately in the bonds of tribulation.' From Mr. Faynix of course I received nothing.

It was at the commencement of the winter of 18—that I found myself at an hotel in Genoa. Two years had now elapsed since the elopement of Helen, and I was still as far as ever from discovering the objects of my search. Aware of Helen's delicate state of health, and the tendency she had always shown towards consumption, I determined to make a tour of the chief places for winter resort along the Mediterranean, in the hopes that among their myriad of visitors I might perchance come across my guilty wife. Thanks to a purely accidental circumstance my hopes were realised.

Dinner at *table-d'hôte* was just over, and I had seated myself in an arm-chair on the verandah outside the *salle-à-manger* to

smoke my post-prandial cigar, when my attention was attracted by the conversation of two elderly ladies near me. One of them was a Lady Charles Ilchester, wife of the brother of the then Marquis of Ilfracombe. She was a great leader of the evangelical world, and had slightly known Helen in the days when she was Lady Trevennis.

‘And was Nice very full when you left?’ asked Lady Charles of the other lady.

‘O, very full indeed; much fuller than usual, on account of the scarlet-fever breaking out at Hyères.’

‘You have let your villa, have you not?’ continued Lady Charles.

‘Yes. You remember that unhappy woman whom we all regarded as the wife of Sir John Trevennis, and who turned out, you know, such an atrocious creature?’


You can imagine how I pricked up my ears at this.

‘O, perfectly! it was a most awful affair—most awful! Such a pretty person she was too! What became of her?’ said Lady Charles.

‘O, she married that handsome young secretary of her father’s, to whom she had long been attached—indeed, they say—and the lady’s voice dropped so low, that I could not hear what she said, but I divined pretty well its drift.

‘You don’t really mean that she left Mr. Disney? What an abominable creature—abominable!’ cried Lady Charles.

‘Yes, and then they travelled about, chiefly in the Ionian Islands and Asia Minor, under the assumed names of Mr. and Mrs. Graham. Then of course you can imagine the result. He got tired of her and left her, and she has rented my villa for the next four months. Of course I did not know that I had let it to such a per-



son, else I should have objected; but I left it in the hands of the agent, and he seemed perfectly satisfied with this Mrs. Graham. It is an excellent "let" for me, so far as money is concerned.'

'But how do you know that her conduct will be such as you desire whilst living under your roof? Instead of an excellent let, I call it a very dangerous one!' said Lady Charles.

'O, there is no danger! If the poor creature lives over the month, it is all that can be expected of her.'

'What, is she dangerously ill?'

'Most dangerously — consumption so rapid, that it is beyond the power of man not only to check it, but to alleviate her: the left lung is completely gone, and the remaining one so diseased, that it is a wonder she can breathe at all.'

'Poor soul!—soon she will be beyond



the judgment of man, and it is not for us now to condemn her. I should like to see her, and talk to her. You don't know whether she thinks at all of the future? Is her aunt Lady Ann Holcombe with her? If so, she could have no better or more serious companion,' said Lady Charles.

'No. She wishes to be quite alone, and to see none of her friends or relations. She joined the Church of Rome, you know, about two months since, and so perhaps—'

I had heard enough, and did not permit the speaker to finish her sentence. No one was fortunately near us; and apologising for my intrusion, I asked if she would kindly tell me the name of her villa at Nice, for I had accidentally overheard her conversation, and felt a deep interest in this Mrs. Graham.

'Villa Rialto; it overlooks the Bay of

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Villafranche. But I think your journey there will be fruitless; for the lady is so ill, that she sees no one but her doctor and the Roman Catholic chaplain.'

'She will see *me*,' I replied, bowing and taking my departure.

I was so agitated with the news I had just heard, that big tears started to my eyes, and it was all I could do to command myself sufficiently to pass through the corridor of the hotel on the way to my room. Once alone in my chamber, I thought of all I had just heard whilst I was busily packing up to take my instant departure for Nice.

'Helen, *my* Helen, dying! in a strange land, away from all, away from me—dying! Awful retribution! Deserted by her lover as she had deserted me! What agony of remorse she must suffer now, when she reflects on the past and thinks of the future!


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My poor, poor darling! at least I shall be by your side now in your hour of trouble! O, why did I not know this sooner? why did you not write to me, and ask me to forgive you? You must be sorry *now* that you so cruelly wronged me! Were you afraid of me—afraid that I might come, and, with the just anger of a husband, reproach you, curse you in your dying hours? O, Helen, Helen! if the forgiveness of a man you so basely treated can cheer your path through the valley of the shadow of death, most fully, most freely do I grant it you! My own! my own! still in my heart you have ever been my own—ah! woe to me that I in like turn have not been *your* own!—what more do I wish than to take you back to my heart, to pardon all your erring life, once more to hear your dear lips whisper my name, and be again your husband! Yes, Helen, you have crushed

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my honour, my manhood's pride, my sense of disgrace; but stronger than all these is my love to you! O, give me back a real true woman's love, and all the past will be forgiven; and, in spite of the opinion of the world, in spite of sneers from all, I will still call you wife! Fool! is she not dying—ay, may even be dead—whilst I am away from her? Dead without my forgiving her! dead without hearing her dear voice pleading to me for forgiveness! O, if it be so, what a hell is in store for me! My only hope in life has been to see her again, and to trust that we might, even after the past, still be united! But time will soon show what is in store for me. A few short hours, and then we meet face to face again, my Helen!

It was late that night that I arrived at Nice. As I took a *fiacre* from the station to the Villa Rialto, the fashionable little



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town was silent as the tomb, into which so many of its inmates would soon be consigned, and the waves of the Mediterranean moaned along the coast, as if murmuring a funeral elegy for the departed. The moon shone clearly from the deep blue vault of heaven, and lit with her cold silvery light the streets of Nice, the distant villas, and the whole coast-line of the surrounding country. The air was richly scented with orange-groves and almond-trees; and, save the barking of some houseless dog, not a sound was heard as I drove along to wake the continual silence, so still and so intense that it was almost *audible*. After half an hour's drive I arrived at the Villa Rialto. I dismissed the driver about a hundred yards before the house, and then walked up the avenue which led to the entrance-hall, for I had left my luggage at the station.

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The villa was a very pretty detached commodious-looking house, standing in its own grounds. But my eyes were then directed, not to the architecture of the house or the tastefully laid-out garden, but to one window on the second floor, which stared me full in the face. All the other windows of the house were perfectly dark; but on the blinds of this one a strong light was reflected from a moderator lamp inside the room. Here, then, I thought, was the chamber of my suffering wife; and, as I stood under its lighted window, I raised my hat, and prayed that even yet all might be well with us both. Just then a thick black cloud crossed the moon, and effectually concealed its pallid beams, which till then had been shining brightly. I could not help regarding it as a bad omen; it seemed as if Heaven refused to hear my prayer. I rang softly the door-bell; and the

only sounds for a time that followed its muffled peal were the beating of my heart and my quick nervous respiration. Then I saw the glass-panes above the hall-door lit up, and the next moment the door was slowly opened. A woman, who looked partly like a nurse and partly like a very respectable housekeeper, stood before me.

‘I wish to see Mrs. Graham,’ said I.

‘Impossible, sir. Who are you?’ replied the woman, in that soft hushed sort of voice which comes from attending much on the sick. ‘Are you a relative, sir?’ continued the woman.

‘Yes, a very near one. I, of course, don’t wish to see Mrs. Graham now; but let me lie on the sofa for to-night—anywhere—and to-morrow, when she is awake, tell her that I am here. She will, I am sure, see me: my name is Disney—I am her husband.’

The woman's face brightened as she said, 'O, sir, I am so glad you have come. Madame has been wearying so for your arrival. Walk in here, and I will let madame know ;' and she led me into a very handsome drawing-room.

As she lighted the candles on the chimney-piece I said :

'Is madame, then, awake now?'

'O, sir, she is always awake—always, always; but O so patient!' And then she came up to me, and, with that freedom which is never intrusive, but which is a chief characteristic of the Italian servants, she said, laying her hand on my shoulder, 'Be not severe to her;' and then left the room.

Severe to her! Ah, erring soul! if forgiveness and kindness will be severity, then indeed I shall be severe. 'Ha, Annette! *you* here?' exclaimed I, as the door



opened, and Helen's maid, who had attended upon her at Double Zero House, entered.

‘Yes, sir; when I heard milady’ (Helen was still ‘Lady Trevennis’ to her) ‘was in Nice, I asked her ladyship if she would like to have me again. She was always a good mistress to me, sir. And so, when milady said she would be very glad for me to come back, I left the family I was with; and that’s the reason why I am here, sir. But we are keeping milady; she wishes so much to see you. O, sir, why didn’t you come before? How milady have longed for your arrival, to be sure!’

‘Stop, Annette; I want to have a word with you. Is your mistress very ill?’

‘Come upstairs and satisfy yourself, sir,’ said the maid evasively.

‘But will it be a good thing for her to see me?’

‘The very best thing that could ever

happen. O, sir, why, it's the very thing that she has been fretting about for the last month. She has done nothing but worry herself all the time because you did not reply to her letters.'

'Her letters?'

'Why yes, sir; milady wrote three times to you, and I posted them. They were addressed to your club in London and to your villa at Passy.'

'I never got them, then; they must have been lost. I only knew a few hours ago that your mistress was at Nice, and that she was ill.'

'You'd better follow me upstairs now, sir; milady will be impatient.' And as I followed her she whispered to me, '*Elle est bien malade; mais vous la pardonnerez, monsieur, n'est-ce pas?*'

'*Pouvez-vous le douter?*' I replied with tears in my eyes.

I ascended the broad oak staircase after Annette, till she stopped at a door which opened on to the landing. Annette turned the handle very gently, and entered the room. I heard Helen's voice (how hollow and weak it sounded!) say impatiently, 'Well?' and then the maid replied that I was outside. 'Leave me, Madame Méry, and you too, Annette; I wish to be alone. Tell Mr. Disney to enter.' As soon as the nurse and Annette had quitted Helen and descended the staircase, I entered her room.

A bright fire burning in the grate, and a moderator lamp on a table near the bed, reflected fully their light upon her whom I had now not seen for more than twenty-four cruel months, but whose image was so deeply engraved on my heart, that during the terrible interval it had never for a single moment been absent from my mind. I could hardly believe now that two years

had intervened since last we met. The many weary, weary months—the chafing restless impatience, the incessant heart-burnings, the hopes and the fears—in fact, the whole past, seemed to be more like a hideous dream, now that I was again in the presence of Helen, than a bitter reality.

She was lying in bed carefully propped up by pillows, whilst around her shoulders was a thick Angola shawl. My arrival had evidently interrupted Annette in dressing her beautiful hair, for it fell over her shoulders unfettered by ribbon or comb, like a river that had burst its dam. Her face was deadly pale, save where the ruthless hand of consumption had impressed its cruelly beautiful hectic flushes. Her lips were ashy white and bloodless, and her gaunt hollow cheeks made her look twenty years older than she really was. The portion of the neck which protruded from the

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folds of her shawl was shrunken and bony, like that of a woman of seventy; and Helen's neck and shoulders I always considered the best points of her physical beauty. The only feature that ill-health had not marred, but rather enhanced, were her splendid eyes. They were as deep and lustrous as in the days of old; and as they gazed half timidly, half fondly, at me as I entered her room, I thought that I had never seen a dying face lit up with so spiritual or so angelic an expression. A *dying* face, I say; for the first glance that I cast upon Helen—her wan wasted features, her thin diaphanous hands—plainly told me that the sands of her life were ebbing fast, and that soon Death must come and claim her for his own.

She had tried to rise from her couch as I approached, but the effort was too much for her feeble strength, and she sank back exhausted. But as I encircled her shoulders

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with my arms, and pressed my lips against her poor haggard cheeks, she clasped me round the neck with both her frail wasted hands so firmly, that escape, had I wished it, would have cost me a struggle. It seemed as if her heart had so thirsted for my presence, that now that I was near her, there could be no satisfying her long-pent-up affection. Kiss after kiss she impressed upon my lips, cheeks, and forehead, whilst her tears, mingling with mine, flowed down on the snowy coverlet of the bed in large and frequent drops.

‘How good of you to come at last! When I received no reply from you, I thought you wished me to die unforgiven. Dearest, you forgive me? You do not know the agony of mind I have endured, when I thought of my conduct to you, and of that wicked, wicked letter. Say you forgive me, Harry dear. I own I do not

deserve it; but, say you forgive me! Harry,' she whispered tremblingly, 'am I still your wife in the eyes of the law, or have you divorced me, for I have heard nothing?'

I replied, that she was still my wife, and that nothing would have induced me to publicly expose her conduct a second time; and then I told her that I had received no letters at all from her, and that it was due to a perfect accident that I was now by her side. Her letters must have been forwarded to me from Passy; but owing to my constantly being on the move, they failed, I suppose, to reach me.

She seemed to be much relieved at this, and that my coming to see her was of my own accord.

'Then you bear me no malice for my wicked conduct to you? O, Harry, bear me no malice now! I have suffered such agony of mind and body lately, that hard

words, reproaches from you, though indeed I most richly deserve them, would kill me! Look here at my poor attenuated frame, darling, and see whether I am not punished already!' and she bared her once splendidly moulded white arm—now painfully thin and shrivelled.

I kissed it passionately, and my tears ran down upon it till they dropped one by one on the bed from her arm, like rain from a withered branch. I assured her over and over again that I pardoned all, and that my hope now was that with care and attention she might still live, and make me happy again.

She was about to speak, when she was seized by a violent fit of coughing. What a cough it was!—more like the winds resounding in a hollow cavern than a human cough. She put a handkerchief up to her lips when the paroxysm was over, and it



was drenched with blood. I gave her some syrup-and-water to drink which was by her side, and she lay back perfectly motionless for a few minutes, as if utterly exhausted. I leant over her and whispered:

‘My Helen, this talking is too much for you. Lie down and go to sleep: I will watch by your bedside till you wake.’

She pressed my hand which had been locked in hers, and said faintly, ‘O, I never sleep! In a few minutes I shall have recovered, and I have *so* much to talk to you about. Besides, the sight of your dear face invigorates me with quite new strength.’

We remained silent for a little time, and then Helen resumed:

‘We must not be buoyed up with false hopes, Harry. My days, perhaps my hours, are numbered, and I am quite prepared to depart, dearest. I have humbly asked par-

don from those I have wronged, and all have granted forgiveness. Aunt Ann offered to come and see me (papa could not, he said, on account of his ministerial duties; but he has forgiven me—coldly, but still forgiven me—I deserve no more)—but I begged that she would not. You, though, had not forgiven me; and O, the thought that he whom I now loved the most on earth should still bear rancour against me was bitter grief indeed!

‘What did you say, my sweet? that you loved me more than all the world beside?’

‘Yes, Harry, more than all the world beside!’ said she, caressing my beard with her hands, and something like her old smile lighting up her face. ‘Till in that awful delirium of erratic love I quitted you’—and here her face became stern and set like the features of the dead—‘I never knew how I

loved you. It was when I contrasted you with—with *him*, and thought over all your kindness and delicacy towards me, that I found out—alas, too late!—that I had in my blindness thrown away a most precious jewel, and accepted in its stead but the falsest paste. How I loathed myself and *him* afterwards! I hoped and hoped so, my darling, that you might follow us, and at last succeed in discovering us.'

I told her that I had spent nearly two years in travelling about after them, but till this very moment in vain.

'Yes,' she whispered, 'it would have been very difficult for you to find us out. We went first into the highlands of Turkey, and then travelled all over Asia Minor, and never visited the ordinary beaten paths; so that we were not likely to meet with anyone either of us knew who could put you on our track.'

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‘And how came you here—alone?’ I asked.

‘O, Harry, you were always quite right in your opinion of that wicked man! It was not long before I discovered to what a demon I had trusted myself. He, too, soon found out that I regretted the step I had taken, and was longing to throw myself at your feet and ask your pardon. And this discovery did not tend to make him more amiable to me. He treated me with every indignity, kept me days without food, beat me at times most cruelly, and swore that if I did not love him, and learn to behave myself as his slave, he would sell me as a Circassian to the surrounding Koords.’

I with difficulty kept my temper during this recital, and most solemnly vowed that my Lord Edgeware should pay to the uttermost farthing for his foul unmanly conduct

the moment that the soul of his victim had quitted its mortal tenement.

Helen saw what thoughts were passing in my mind, for she said :

‘Harry, calm yourself, and let the dead past bury its dead. Revenge is neither for you nor for me. Come nearer, my darling, for I must finish soon and rest a little.’

‘Rest now, Helen; I will not leave you.’

After a little opposition, she complied with my request, and was soon in a profound slumber.

Early the next morning she beckoned me to her side, and said :

‘Let me conclude what I have to tell you. We were at that time travelling in Asia Minor—visiting quite distant and unknown towns; all *he* cared for was the sport about their districts : I was surrounded by Mohammedans and savage tribes, and had no chance of escape. He knew that I

was entirely in his power, and it is needless for me to tell you the various indignities he subjected me to; they only excite wicked thoughts of hate and revenge in my mind, and I wish all to be peace and calmness within me now. Besides, I have forgiven him, as others have forgiven me; and, Harry darling, for my sake you must do the same!

‘But to return. It was at the commencement of last September that we were at Tocat, a little town in Asia Minor, where there is a Catholic mission station. I determined to claim the protection of its priest, and to tell him who I was, and all my sad wicked history, and ask him to conceal me. At the dead of night I knocked at his door, with my travelling-bag full of all that I could easily carry away with me. The good man was very much astonished, as you may imagine, for he lived quite alone,

and had let me in. I begged to talk with him in secret for a few minutes.

‘He led me into a little room, and looked at me half kindly and half wonderingly, for I have no doubt that he thought me mad. I told him *all*. At first he felt disinclined to believe me; but when I spoke about Lord Edgeware, he at once paid attention to what I said. I begged him to give me a garret in his house, away from every eye, till my hated lover — lover, indeed! — had departed. I told him that as I left the house in which we were, I had thrown some of my clothes on the brink of an ancient Roman well, so as to let people have the idea that I had made away with myself.

‘The man to whom I had applied for refuge was a French Jesuit priest on a temporary mission at Tocat; he had heard of Lord Edgeware at Paris, and believed everything that was bad about him. He said that there

was no necessity for me to hide in his house—he would most gladly give me accommodation for that night; and on the morrow he would see Lord Edgeware, and tell him that I had placed myself under his protection; and there the matter would end. I was a British subject, and no slave; and if necessary, the priest said he would ask the aid of the Pasha, but he thought that there would be no occasion for this.’

Again she had to cease talking, owing to a renewed attack of her painful cough. I begged her not to exhaust herself by any more conversation, but to keep quiet. She pressed my hand silently, and followed my advice for a few minutes.

She lay so still and motionless, with her large unnaturally lustrous eyes gazing fixedly upon a splendid ebony and ivory crucifix above the side of her bed, that I thought at first she had passed away.



Her face was illumined by such a bright spiritual smile, that it seemed as if her soul, before it winged its flight from earth, was resting on her features, to take a last farewell of its beautiful tenement. I bent over her and whispered her name; she slightly turned her head towards me, and looked so long and earnestly at me, that I feared her mind was wandering.

‘Harry,’ she began, ‘now that the past is over, I can hardly believe that I have endured all that I have. How soon we forget our miseries when we are again happy! When I look on your dear face, and see forgiveness fully impressed upon it, I almost think that I must have been dreaming, and that we are still at Passy.’

‘Let it be so, love—let the past be a dream; and let us hope for a happy future,’ said I.

‘Yes, my darling, for a happy future;

but not *here*,' replied she, crossing herself as she again fixed her eyes on the crucifix. 'But a few more words will finish what I have to say, and then I shall try to sleep. I feel so happy now, my own, that I think I shall be able again to sleep: it was more worrying myself about you than my cough that kept me always awake,' she murmured, smiling sweetly at me, and passing her attenuated fingers fondly through my curly locks. 'Let me see—where was I?'

'At the priest's house at Tocat.'

'O, yes! Well, next morning, Père Ambroise (for so he was called), a tall gaunt-looking priest, with hollow gleaming eyes and a pale ascetic face, sent a messenger to say he wished to see Lord Edgeware.

'Lord Edgeware, who, I suppose, concluded that this request was connected with my sudden disappearance—for I had left

him when he was fast asleep and perfectly inebriated, which was his usual condition now in the evenings—promptly obeyed the invitation. And then a scene ensued which I shall not trouble you with. Lord Edgware abused and stormed, and made the most insulting comments upon the reverend father's kindness towards me; but all in vain.

‘The father said that an erring daughter had claimed his protection against a man whose life had been one tissue of sustained wickedness, and that, as a man and a priest, he would defend me. “Go, sir,” said the father with haughty dignity; “you have worked sufficient ruin in your victim; leave her in peace, and go and sin no more. Mine be the holy task now of seeking to lead this deeply-erring woman to the sacred paths of religion.”

‘Edgware then turned round to me, and implored me, with vows, promises, and

entreaties, not to abandon him. But the mask he wore in society, and which had so effectually concealed from me his features that I thought him no worse than other men of the world, had during the last few months dropped from his face, and had exposed him to me in his true colours. I told him I was only too glad to throw off the odious chains that had shackled me to him, and that all I wished was now to go to England and to seek forgiveness from you, my darling !

‘He vowed vengeance; he threatened to carry me away by force; and during the week he stayed at Tocat he incessantly tried to see me; but in vain; for I had, the very next day after my arrival at the priest’s house, been placed in the small convent over which he was the spiritual pastor. At last, Edgeware, not knowing where I was, and fearing that the Pasha,

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who was a great friend of Father Ambroise, would take the matter up, and deal summarily with him if he annoyed the Catholic mission any longer by his threats and insults—for the lives of travellers are held very cheaply by those native potentates—at last quitted the place. Since then I have never seen him again.'

She paused for a few minutes, and took a draught of the syrup by her side.

'Only a few more words,' she said pleadingly; for I had for the second time begged her to defer her painful narrative till the afternoon. 'I remained in the convent for a month, because at the end of that time the father was to return to France, accompanied by two sisters of the convent, and he offered to be my escort. Most gladly I accepted his kind offer. O, Harry, you cannot think what a blessed time was that stay in that sweet convent! Surrounded

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by those pious, gentle, loving sisters—all French, and ladies in the highest sense of the word—who spent their lives in denying themselves and doing good to all around, their society had a most beneficial influence upon me. They never reproached me, they never shunned me ; they talked to me about religion in an earnest simple manner, which went straight to my heart. Ah, you cannot tell how happy I was to be once more treated as an equal by my own sex !

‘Father Ambroise, too, visited me often, prayed with me, and talked most solemnly to me of the past and of the future. I shall draw a veil over those struggles with my wicked heart—over my prayers and my agonies of remorse, which preceded what, in all humility, I call my conversion—for that portion of my life is between me and my God ; but sufficient for you to know, Harry, is, that I am most earnestly repentant of

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my evil, evil life, and that I was baptised one evening by Father Ambroise, and became a member of the holy Catholic Church. Of that faith I now am, and in that faith I shall die.'

She paused for a few moments, whilst I arranged the pillows behind her, and then resumed :

'It seemed by that act as if I had exchanged my temporal for my spiritual life. My health had always been delicate when in London ; but the troubles of the past, its anxieties and attendant miseries, had considerably hastened my malady. I did not know till the doctor of the convent frankly told me that my left lung was quite gone, and that my right one was so impaired that life at the utmost could only be an affair of a few months longer.'

I heaved a convulsive sob, and buried my face in the bed.

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‘Weep not, my own ! The parting now is sad, but think of the future ; and, my Harry,’ whispered she in my ear, ‘live for it !—At the end of October we left the convent ; and had it not been that I wished to see you, and to obtain forgiveness from those that I have so cruelly disgraced, I should have been content to have ended my days in that sweet convent, and among those dear sisters. In the middle of November we arrived at Trieste ; but I was so weak, and had such difficulty in breathing, that I felt it would be utterly impossible for me to push on to Paris, where I hoped you still were executing those commissions you had to do. One of the sisters kindly accompanied me to Nice, and did not leave me till I was comfortably housed here. Fortunately, whilst being wheeled about, I met Annette, and her coming again into my service is a great comfort to me. There,



Harry darling, I have told you all my sad history—no, not all; I forgot one thing. Lord Edgeware told me that he *had* heard that day behind the arras that I had dispatched you to Paris; and so, when he read in the papers about Vaudrien's capture—ah, what awful associations that name conjures up!—he put two and two together, and concluded that I had informed the French Government of the conspiracy.'

'But how did he know that you knew this man Vaudrien?' interrupted I.

'O, he had seen him call upon me at Princes-gardens and at Coombe Royal when he wanted money, you know. I always noticed that Edgeware was very curious about my acquaintance with Vaudrien, and that he used to ask me questions about him; but I always changed the conversation.'

'But did Lord Edgeware know Vaudrien?' I asked.


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‘He met him accidentally at Paris, at some public ball, and made his acquaintance in order to find out the nature of his intimacy with me. According to Edgeware, Vaudrien told him, in a fit of drunken confidence, that I was his wife, and that he could get any amount of money out of me. Whether Lord Edgeware suspected that Vaudrien was my husband, or whether Vaudrien, as he said, revealed the secret to him, I cannot tell; nor does it now make much difference. With his cynical cruelty, Edgeware told me that he had written to Vaudrien after his condemnation, and had told him that it was through *me* and Mr. Disney that his conspiracy was discovered. He advised Vaudrien to revenge himself on me by sending all particulars of my marriage with him to Sir John Trevennis; and promised him, if he did this, 5000*l.* for his illegitimate son, who then lived with him.

At the same time he gave him the strictest injunctions not to state who had betrayed the matter to him, and recommended him to attribute his confession to the score of conscience. He also told him to say that you, Harry, had offered him money if he would let his secret die with him. You know how Lord Edgeware's suggestions were adopted.'

'I do. But what was his object in doing this? It seems to me a gratuitously base act,' I asked.

'Because,' replied Helen, clasping me close to her, and burying her face in my beard—'because he thought that when my conduct should be exposed, and I degraded from my position in society, I would be the more easily a prey to his evil designs, and consent to elope with him (for he knew then that I loved him—indeed, I admitted as much to him), when I found myself shunned and avoided by all, and—alone !'



‘What a villain that man is !—how unutterably heartless has been his conduct !’ I exclaimed, bursting with rage.

‘Not more heartless or more base than I have been,’ said she, hanging down her head.

‘But why did he ask Vaudrien to traduce my character? You know Vaudrien accused me of being your lover.’

‘So I heard, Harry, for the first time, from Edgeware, and I can only account for it by his bitter hatred of you; and I suppose he hoped, that the more I was degraded the lower I should sink to the level he wanted me to fall, and the easier I should become his mistress; for he always refused to marry me, as you know, when I wrote to him, offering to become his wife. But I think, darling, I should like to rest a little now. I feel fatigued after talking so much. Kiss me, Harry; but do not leave me till the doctor pays me his morning visit.’



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE LAST ACT.

'Hereafter, in that world where all are pure,  
We two will meet before high God, and thou  
Wilt spring to me and claim me thine, and know  
I am thy wife . . . Leave me that,  
I charge thee, my last hope.'

'But I forgot my vow.'

**I** HAVE but little more to relate respecting my life which can be of any interest to you. Helen was daily sinking, and as she cared to be tended by no one but me, I was unremitting in my devotion and attention to her wants. I soon saw that the restoration of her health was beyond the region of human science, and that it was only hoping against hope to indulge in any expectation that she

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might permanently recover. The doctor, who called every morning and night to see her, and whom I begged to tell me candidly the exact state of her health, said that her death was now only a matter of days, and that it was useless and vain in him to bid me entertain the smallest hope of her recovery.

‘All I can do now,’ said he, ‘and all that I shall attempt to do, is to alleviate her painful cough, and to endeavour to promote a freer respiration. Your society and attention to her are, however, far more efficacious than any medicine can be.’

At first, after I had arrived, and when the wind blew from the south, and the air was mild and genial, I used to walk by Helen’s side, as she was wheeled about the garden of the villa; but at the end of a fortnight this was forbidden, and she was told that she must confine herself strictly

to her room; and then, after a few days, the order came that she was to be confined entirely to her bed.

She could only speak now in a very low whisper, and her strength had so deserted her, that it was with difficulty she could even raise her food to her mouth. Beside myself, Annette, and the nurse, her only visitors were the doctor and her priest. She confessed and communicated every morning; and when she spoke to me now, it was very seldom about the past, but about the future.

Fully believing in the tenets of the Church she had lately joined, she felt most acutely that though the past had indeed been most bitter to both of us, still the future offered no bright prospect to her of our being united above. I was a Protestant, a heretic, and one out of the pale of the true Church, and consequently beyond sal-

vation. Again and again she would turn the conversation upon the grandeur and beauty of the Catholic faith, and with tears of deep and unfeigned sorrow standing in her lustrous eyes, would pray that I might enter the true fold. I felt that the fact of my being a heretic weighed most heavily on her mind, and that it was the one great grief which embittered her dying moments. Death otherwise had no sting for her; *the* sting of death to her was, that in the future we should never meet; and that I, her now beloved husband, belonged to another and an erring creed.

Both she and the priest—a kind, elderly man, whose life at Nice had been one incessant round of attending on the dying, and who took a deep interest in us—gently exercised their powers of persuasion; and the priest, with his arguments and book-learning, and Helen, with soft entreaties



and pleading prayers, were two very formidable opponents for a man of my weak character to encounter.


It was one day after having a long conversation with the priest that the thought crossed my mind, Is not Roman Catholicism, after all, a truer and more logical religion than Protestantism? The imaginative part of Romanism had always had its full effect on me: its splendid ceremonial, its magnificent edifices, and its alliance with music, painting, and sculpture had always appealed strongly to my sentimental and æsthetic feelings; and its observances, so skilfully interwoven with the business and the festivities of life, had, both when I was at Oxford and on the Continent, ever been a source of interest and delight to me.

I had never cared much for the Church of England. It was true that I belonged to it, as nine men out of ten belonged to it,


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because they have been brought up in its belief, and because it is good policy to continue within its pale. In England there is a religious aversion to Roman Catholics and a social antipathy to Dissenters, and men who belong to either of these very opposite creeds labour under disadvantages from which a Churchman is exempt. But if you were to analyse the feelings of nine out of ten members of your Established Church, you would find that they either ridiculed its catholic pretensions or despised its ignorant narrow-mindedness. They are merely nominal members, as they are nominal Christians. The tenth member believes in the Church, follows what it teaches, and shuns what it repudiates; and that tenth member is generally either a woman or, what is synonymous, an old man.

For my part, I regarded your Church as a national establishment so anxious to be



erected on a broad basis, that would permit all shades of opinions to be represented within its walls, that the very breadth of its basis tended to nullify its character, and made its teaching worse than confusing — ridiculous. Like most men whose natures are weak but not thoroughly base, I had very strong promptings after piety. I cared very little to what religious sect of the Christian world I belonged; for religious sects, I thought, were far more anxious about inculcating their distinctive tenets than the grand truths of the religion they professed; but I certainly wished to be a good man. Until I had met Helen, so far as outward morality and respectability go, my life had been most exemplary. Afterwards, when my infatuation for her, and my wish blindly to do what would please her, became alone my religion, my conduct, as I have related in these pages, was most reprehensible and



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worldly; but for all that, I hoped that the day would arrive when I should become a changed character. Like Augustine, my prayer was, 'Make me holy, but *not yet*.'


And why should that time not be now? Helen was dying; and after her death, what possible interest had I in life? What would be to me fame, worldly distinction, and wealth, now that I had no one to share them with? Even had I the talent or the power to obtain these, the will was wanting, for my heart was dead. My life henceforth was to be a dreary hopeless blank; for men, who have loved once as I have loved, *can* never love again. What, then, lay before me to illumine my dark future but the consolations of religion? Where could I live better apart from the world—in it, but not of it—devoting more my whole energies to the services of religion, and surrounded by those who would counsel me aright, and enlighten me by the

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example of their self-denying lives, than in the Romish Church? Were its tenets so very different from those of a section in the English Church? When I followed ritualism at Oxford, as an undergraduate, did I not call the sacrament 'the mass'? and was I not taught that I was to confess, pray to saints, and believe in the priesthood? Where, then, was the great difference between the Roman and the Anglican Churches? And did not the Romish Church possess advantages, in one organised system of belief and in an absence of theological divisions, which the other did not? Was it not better to be a member of a Church in harmony with its followers than of one that taught in the same breath the apostolical succession and the disbelief of the Scriptures, the mysteries of the sacrament and the denial of the redemption, and which has to refer to a Chancery lawyer as its ultimate court of appeal?

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The more I thought over the subject, the more I determined to follow the wishes of Helen, and to show her that, even in her last hours, her influence was still as strong over me as ever. I frankly own, that had it not been for the pleasure such a step would afford to her, I should have, at *that* time, in all probability, remained in the communion in which I was brought up. I thought *then* very differently from what I think now, and I only rejoice that my erring wife has been the means of leading me to think as the last few years I have thought. The more I contemplate the step I have taken, the more am I convinced that I have done rightly. Between the advancing strides of infidelity on the one hand, and Roman Catholicism on the other, the English Establishment must be absorbed. It is gradually being so even now, and, thanks to your legislature, its downfall will be



speedier than otherwise it would have been. A month after my meeting with Helen, I became a member of the Romish Church.


The morning after my induction, which was as yet unknown to my wife, as I intended my conversion to be a pleasant surprise for her, I entered her room, and received communion with her for the first time. Then I told her how I had followed her advice; but I did not tell her that my conversion to Romanism was *then* more the effect of a wish to please her than the offspring of sincere conviction, though I hoped that soon the time would come when I should view my new religion in the light that a true son of the Church should regard it.

Helen's joy was intense; indeed, so intense, that I feared her feeble frame would succumb under its influence. My fears were not premature. She had passed a most restless night, and the mistral, which had been

blowing over Nice for the last two days, had greatly increased her cough, so that she was weaker and more exhausted than ever. Well I remember that morning! The sun was shining brilliantly from the deep blue sky, and shooting his splendid beams across the room, so that Helen was bathed in their rays, which thus seemed to form a golden bridge from her to heaven. She gazed long and rapturously at the vaporous light, and murmured to me :

‘Soon, Harry, it will be all light, all light! Farewell the awful past! Welcome the happy future!’ and her eyes rested lovingly on the crucifix.

‘Harry darling,’ said she, turning her face to me, ‘I have often wanted to ask you one thing, but it has always escaped my fading memory. You will let the past *be* the past when I am gone, and bury in my grave all feelings of revenge towards Lord Edgeware?’





‘O, Helen,’ I cried, starting to my feet, ‘it is impossible! Lord Edgeware and I must meet, and the death of one of us can alone wipe out the insult he has inflicted upon my honour.’

‘Then, Harry dear, be consistent, and kill me too! Have *I* not inflicted an insult also upon your honour? Far be it from me to extenuate Lord Edgeware’s guilt; but that guilt is also shared by me. Would it have been justice to have let Eve remain in the garden of Eden whilst Adam alone received the punishment? Harry, pardon that man, as you have pardoned me. I do not ask you to be reconciled to him, but only to remember that vengeance is not yours.’

‘You ask too much!’ said I hoarsely.

‘Then is my darling, who has *never* turned a deaf ear to my entreaties, to refuse me my dying request?’ asked she pleadingly.

‘Why do you still interest yourself in this man?’ I asked, almost coldly.

‘O, Harry, do not be angry with me—*now!* Why do I plead for him, but because I love you? A duel the world may call an affair of honour, but it is none the less murder. Can I, on the brink of the grave, wish to see the hands of my husband imbued with blood? or to see him ushered into eternity with his heart hot with one of the most accursed passions that degrade humanity—revenge? My darling, can you reconcile these murderous thoughts with your new profession of religion? Cast them from you, my own, cast them from you!’

With an almost superhuman effort, she raised herself in the bed, so that her arms reached my neck, and then she bent down my head to hers, as if with it she would also bend my will.

‘You will not refuse me, darling? Let me not die in doubt!’

Reluctantly, and with words that seemed to choke in my parched throat, I consented to renounce all thoughts of vengeance.

She fell back on the pillow, smiling fondly at me, and with her hands locked in mine. A sunbeam played on her face for a few seconds, and then a passing cloud obscured its rays, and left the room cold and dark.

I bent over her; she was lying pale and motionless, and gazing fixedly at me with a hard stony stare. I whispered her name, but she moved not; and it was only when I placed my ear to her lips, that I knew that my wife had passed away.

Her last words had been exercised in favour of Lord Edgeware!

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A month after this I was in Paris, ar-

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ranging various matters in my villa, preparatory to renouncing the world and entering into a monastery. One evening, as I was walking along the Boulevard des Italiens towards Passy, I heard Lord Edgeware's voice behind me. He had just issued from the Maison Dorée, and was accompanied by a friend, with whom he was talking in a loud voice. I looked into an open shop, and he passed on ahead with his friend. I followed him; why, I knew not; but I was the victim of an irresistible impulse, and you might then just as well have turned a bloodhound, who has at last discovered a long-sought scent, from tracking his prey as have prevented me from following the man I so bitterly hated. The very sight of him awoke all the worst feelings of my nature; and, forgetful of my vow to Helen, of my religious professions, of everything, I was mindful of but one influence

—revenge. If ever the madness of my ancestors descended upon me, it marked me for its own that night.

‘What has become of that woman who accompanied you to Asia Minor?’ I heard Lord Edgeware’s friend ask.

I heard his lordship reply—a reply coarse, vindictive, and false. I listened calmly to the insults he heaped upon the memory of Helen and to his diabolical witticisms, which seemed to amuse his companion immensely; but if ever man resolved to obtain full vengeance for the past, and to brook no interference with that resolution, I was then that man.

I heard Lord Edgeware ask his friend to accompany him to his hotel, and then his refusal, as they parted at the corner of the street.

‘Well, we shall meet at —’s to-night, I suppose?’ said Lord Edgeware inquiringly.

His friend assented, and they parted.

I hailed a *fiacre*, and bade the man drive to Lord Edgeware's hotel. I knew not where it was, but I thought that the new and much-talked-of mansion which Lord Edgeware had lately built must be familiar to the Parisian drivers. I was right; for the man, without asking any questions, drove off at once.

At the end of a quarter of an hour we entered a courtyard and stopped before a low massive building, whose façade was of Italian architecture, of the Doric and Ionic orders, and conspicuous for its splendid pillars of polished granite. As we drove up to the portico, the servants opened the hall-doors, evidently imagining that I was Lord Edgeware. I dismissed the *fiacre*, and said to the servants that I was expecting Lord Edgeware's arrival immediately, and would wait for him. My tone was so au-

thoritative, that the servants, I suppose, imagined that I was an intimate friend of his lordship, and had called on him by appointment; for they ushered me into a large library at the end of the magnificent hall, without asking me any questions.

As I crossed the tessellated pavement of the hall, and glanced at the splendid works of sculpture, the marble vases and tables, the large family portraits in massive frames, the Roman cabinets full of antique china, Indian gods with jewelled heads, Chinese junks and temples exquisitely carved in ivory, Danish statuettes, and the other *articles de luxe*, that adorned the splendid vestibule, a door opened, and a young pretty woman appeared and exclaimed, '*C'est toi, chéri!*' And then, finding that I was a stranger and not Lord Edgware, she apologised and retreated.

I recognised her as one of those un-

happy women whom *la jeunesse dorée Française* raises periodically to the position of the queen of the Parisian *demi-monde*. Her jewels, dresses, equipages, and lavish expenditure were the talk of Paris. Her hotel in the Rue de — was more like a fairy palace in the pages of the *Arabian Nights* than the home of a woman who but two years ago had been earning four francs a week as a *blanchisseuse* in the Rue de Seine. In her train were ambassadors, princes, and nobles of various countries of the highest degree. Nightly she opened her magnificent rooms to the world, and her receptions were attended by every man in Paris who laid any claim to birth, wealth, or talent. Her balls, her dinners, and suppers, followed by the most ruinous play, were more crowded and more sought after than invitations to the best and most exclusive houses in Paris. When she ap-



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peared in public—at the opera or theatre, in the Bois or at the races—she was the centre of attraction to the women, who directed incessantly their envious and hostile glances at the ‘Great Outsider.’ Every four months she would sell off by public auction her furniture, her jewels, her *articles de luxe* and *vertu*, her pugs, her ponies, and the presents of her lovers. At those sales, which lasted four days, every *grande dame* in Paris attended, and vied with each other in bidding for the most magnificent of the chattels belonging to Le Papillon (for so this abandoned creature was called), and would afterwards with pride point to some cabinet of buhl or marqueterie, some splendid vase of Chelsea or Dresden, some sculptured Venus, or Adonis, or Antinous, which adorned their rooms, and say to their friends, as if it were a great recommendation, ‘That belonged to Le Papillon!’

Every article sold, the venal beauty, whom Paris had for the last four years pronounced as the most *chic* of her sex and profession, would refurnish her empty rooms, accept more presents, buy more ponies and pugs, till her hotel was as complete as it was before, only that its appointments would be different; for she revelled in variety, profuse ostentation, and profligate splendour.

‘And so,’ thought I, with a feeling of degradation and bitterness, ‘*this* is the successor of Helen!’

The room that I was shown into was magnificently furnished in the gothic style, then just coming into vogue at Paris—gothic oak bookcases full of splendidly bound books, gothic chairs with their morocco backs embossed with the crest and motto of Lord Edgeware, gothic cabinets with mirrors in gothic frames, gothic brass chandeliers suspended from the lofty ceiling

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and jutting out from convenient recesses, and gothic tables covered with books, bronzes, and statuary. On the deep-red walls were military pictures by Vernet, horses by Landseer, sheep by Cowper, sea-pieces by Koekoek and Hook, cows by Verboeckhoven, a brook scene by Lee, fruit by Duffield, a Devonshire scene by Gendall, Breton sketches by Provis, and a portrait of the Countess of Edgeware, wife of the ninth Earl, by Sir T. Lawrence. Before the tessellated gothic fireplace lay a splendid tiger rug; and under the tables and before the cabinets were skins and rugs of all kinds of animals, from the lama of Thibet to the leopard of the Cape. In the corner of the room was a stand full of hunting thongs, riding and four-in-hand whips, and walking-sticks. Above the stand were a pair of foils, which formed a cross beneath a splendid American stag's head.

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I took down these foils, removed their buttons, and placed them by my side, concealed by the window-curtain.

When on the sudden impulse of the moment I had followed Lord Edgeware, and had afterwards resolved to enter his house, my intention was to see him, upbraid him for the past, and then challenge him. But the more I thought over the matter, whilst awaiting the arrival of his lordship, the more I determined to follow another and a more immediate course of action. My brain was on fire, and my heart thirsted for a revenge, which must be quenched. I feared that the moment reflection came to my aid, and made me think of my promise to Helen, of my intention to withdraw myself from all mundane pleasures, and of my aspirations after a monastic life, I should recoil from the deed I intended committing.

I was calm enough to think thus, and



yet rage had so taken possession of my heart, that I felt powerless to resist its diabolical promptings, and determined to act as the impulse of the moment directed me, and not to give myself a chance of recoiling.

Have you ever seen a man so abject a slave to drink, that when the liquor he lays down his life for is placed in front of him, though he is aware that his health is broken, his nerves shattered, and that a miserable death must be the result of the gratification of his indulgence, yet, fully aware of all this, drains the cup to the bottom, utterly helpless to restrain himself?

I was then in the position of that drunkard. I knew fully the consequences that would follow my act of revenge — either my sudden and impenitent death, or a life of shame and remorse; but still, notwithstanding, I resolved to drain the cup to the bottom.

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At the end of a quarter of an hour, I heard Lord Edgeware's voice in the hall.

'A gentleman waiting to see me!—Lord Montacute?'

'No, my lord. I have never seen the gentleman before, but he evidently expected your lordship's arrival.'

And then I heard his footsteps cross the hall, and the next minute he had opened the door, and we were face to face.

'Mr. Disney!' said his lordship, in a tone that evidently did not express a very great amount of gratification at my appearance.

I folded my arms on my chest, and looked at him coldly and steadily. I caught the reflection of my face in an opposite mirror, and I saw that it was pale as death.

'O, a dramatic scene, is it? But, my tragic sir, pray be seated;' and Lord Edgeware threw himself into a capacious chair.

‘A dramatic scene,’ I replied, still standing up, and repeating the words slowly and solemnly.

‘Damme, you are like the ghost in the *Corsican Brothers*. Perhaps, since I had the pleasure of seeing you last, you have been engaged in transpontine dramas. I own a theatre in London, and partly two in Paris; anything I can do for you, I shall—’

‘Your pleasantry is ill-timed,’ I replied, interrupting him. ‘Perhaps, like the ghost in the *Corsican Brothers*, I may have come to warn you of a similar fate.’

‘Have you been dining, Mr. Disney? Either you are very drunk, or else there’s a deal more fun in you than I imagined,’ said his lordship, looking at me calmly, whilst making up a cigarette. ‘But pray be seated. You want money, of course—well, how much?’

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It was with difficulty I repressed my rising passion whilst I answered,

‘I wish something more precious than money!’

‘Then, my sepulchral sir, I am afraid I cannot assist you,’ replied Lord Edgware, lighting his cigarette. ‘My life has been a varied one, and I have visited a few countries, and seen a fairish amount of people; but I have never yet seen anything more precious than money, for the simple fact, that everything that *is* precious can be obtained by it—from justice to absolution, from the possession of a pretty woman to the pacification of an angry husband.’

‘Perhaps I shall enlighten your lordship shortly,’ replied I coldly. ‘You are aware that my wife is dead, I suppose?’

‘I am. Saw it in *Galignani*,’ replied his lordship, reclining in his chair and en-



joying his fragrant cigarette. 'Congratulate you! Always congratulate a man on the loss of his wife. Next to a bachelor, the man most to be envied is the one who knows what a curse matrimony is, and yet has had the luck to get out of it. I never knew a widower yet who wasn't a happy man—contrast between the present and the past, I suppose.'

'Then, Lord Edgware,' replied I fiercely, and giving full rein to my suppressed passion, whilst I approached him, 'learn then, for the first time, that there *is* something more precious than money, and which all the wealth of the Indies can never obtain, and that *is* *revenge*; and learn this too, that there *are* men whose whole lives are so bound up with their wives, who love them so madly, so passionately, that existence without them is *not* happiness, but a life of agony and prolonged torture. Who, pray,

are you, to lay down the law about love?—you whose whole life has been passed in systematic sensuality!—you, heir to a noble name and an ancient house, who have only trailed your honour through the mire, and degraded the order you belong to!—you, whose wealth has been squandered only on your inordinate profligacy!—you, who have never known what pure love is, what honour is, what duty is, or what anything true and noble is!—you, whose only claims on the world's respect are, that you are rich and a peer—'

'The last is not altogether a very disagreeable combination,' yawned his lordship, interrupting me: he had not moved a muscle during the delivery of my tirade. 'But I cannot spend all my time listening to my biography from you, for I am going to a ball in half an hour. I generally refer visits like these to my soli-

citor; but as you are here, tell me what you want.' And his lordship took out a cheque-book from the table near him.

'I will,' replied I, going to the door and locking it, and putting the key in my pocket. It was a strong oak door of most approved gothic pattern, and one more suitable for the vestry-door of a church than for a library.

'Pray what does this mean?' said Lord Edgware angrily.

'It means this!' and I handed to him one of the foils, whilst I took the other. 'It means that either you or I fall, and that till one of us kills the other we go on fighting! It means, my lord, a duel *à mort*!' And I put myself into an attitude which I thought most favourable to effect my purpose.

'But this is irregular,' said his lordship, turning pale and looking for the bell-rope.

'Then it will the better correspond with your life,' said I sneeringly.

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‘Am I to understand, Mr. Disney,’ said Lord Edgeware, assuming the high patrician tone, and trying to overawe me, the contemptible proletarian, with his aristocratic hauteur, ‘that you have forced yourself on me with the intention of challenging me to mortal combat here in my room, and without seconds?’

‘You understand me perfectly. I am delighted to find that fright has not impaired your powers of comprehension,’ replied I insultingly; for all the worse elements of my nature were rapidly obtaining the mastery over me.

‘Then I distinctly refuse; and another word of impertinence from you, and I shall call my servants to turn you out of the house,’ cried his lordship angrily, and dropping the foil on the floor.

‘You may call your servants as much as you please; but before yon door is broken

open a quarter of an hour at least will have to elapse, and before that time one of us will be a corpse.'

'Mr. Disney, again I refuse to fight a duel under such conditions,' said the peer with extreme hauteur. 'Let a friend of yours call on a friend that I shall appoint, and let a hostile meeting be arranged, as is usual under such circumstances. I suppose you think I have wronged you. Well, I will waive my rank, and will consent to give you satisfaction. And now I beg you to retire.'

'In order that you may have me assassinated in Paris, as you attempted in Rome—or arrange a meeting and fire your pistol *before* the final signal, as you also did at Rome. No, my lord; here on this very spot I shall demand vengeance, and do my utmost to take your life. You are right; you *have* wronged me, vile seducer! wronged

me in the bitterest sense that one man can wrong another ; but now has come the hour of retribution, and vengeance or death shall be at last mine !' And flourishing my foil in the air, I made a lunge at him which required all his dexterity to evade. It showed him, however, that I was in sober earnest.

'This is no duel,' cried Lord Edgware, pulling at the bell-rope with all his might ; 'this is murder ! Here, Horace ! Stevens ! help ! There is a maniac here !'

I heard the scudding of footsteps across the hall, which at once prompted me to instant action.

'Defend yourself at once,' I cried, 'or it *will* be murder !' And I rushed upon him savagely. He leaped a table which intervened between him and me, and hastily opening a long flat box close to the whip-stand, seized a pistol, and presented it at me.

‘Another pace, and you are a dead man!’

I heard the cries of servants outside, and their endeavours to burst open the door; and with a rush I tried to pink my foe with my foil.

A gleam of light flashed in front of me, for a second I was enveloped in smoke, and then followed a loud thud, and the pistol-ball was buried in the wall behind me.

I heard a curse escape Lord Edgeware’s lips as he saw that he had missed his aim, and then, seizing the foil he had dropped on the floor, he made a violent rush upon me, as if with one blow he would have annihilated me.

I defended myself to the best of my power; but I was perfectly ignorant of all the laws of fencing, and lunged and guarded just as chance directed. I saw a savage smile pass over Lord Edgeware’s face; for he knew now that he had to deal with a

mere tyro, and the knowledge gave him confidence. Cool and collected, he parried my rapid shower of lunges, and contented himself with retreating before my fierce onslaughts, but I could see he was only waiting for me to get fatigued to give me terrible punishment. Twice he had slightly wounded me in the fleshy part of my arm, but the pain only goaded me on to fiercer but more cautious attacks.

All this time thud after thud fell upon the strong oak panels of the door, and I felt sure that in a few more minutes it must be broken open. Already I could see its iron hinges shaking with the shock after shock that it received from the crowbar or beam that the servants outside were using as a battering-ram. Was my prey, after all, to escape me?

We had been already once round the room, Lord Edgeware always cautiously



backing before my fierce advances, and merely contenting himself with parrying my strokes, and only occasionally, when opportunity offered itself, lunging at me. At last he retreated no longer, but met my foil steadily with his, so that the points of our weapons were pressed tightly against each other's hilts. The man who could free himself first from his adversary would be the victor. Lord Edgeware tried to disengage my foil from my hand and to send it flying; but fortunately I knew how to guard against that trick. At last, by a rapid turn of his hand, he struck my foil so that it touched the ground, and the next moment I expected to have fallen at his feet, pierced right through.

I saw the bending blade of the foil flash in front of me before I could bring my guard up, and I felt that it was now all over with me, and that vengeance was not

to be mine, but his. We were struggling no longer in the middle of the room, on the thick Turkey carpet, but at its extreme western side, on the dark polished oak floor, which was as slippery as the floors of French houses generally are. Just as Lord Edgware was about to deal me the *coup de grâce*, his foot slipped, and my foil, which I was on the point of bringing up to parry his final lunge, entered his left temple, and, without a groan, he fell at my feet—dead! Just then the oak door was burst open.

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You know the result. I was tried for murder at the Cour de Cassation; but thanks to the eloquence of M. Berryer, to the hereditary insanity in my family, and to the pity that my case excited, especially among the fair sex, a verdict was brought in of ‘manslaughter during a fit of temporary insanity.’ I was sentenced to a year’s imprisonment

in the Mazas model penitentiary, and to two years' confinement in the new Bicêtre.

A week after my release, I entered the monastery of La Trappe at Picquigny.

THE END.

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